

A HISTORY OF THE METHODIST CHURCH IN KENYA

1862 - 1967

A Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

The history of the establishment and spread of Christianity in Kenya has been narrated in a one-sided and incomplete way. This is understandable, since the sources available are books written by European missionaries concerning their work. These works have failed to portray adequately the contribution made by Africans, who often did not receive any remuneration for their effort.

From the very beginning, Christian evangelism was done by African catechists and teachers. Since European missionaries were few and the areas they covered were large, it is not surprising to discover that in many places the continuing presence of witness to the gospel depended much more on the resident catechist or teacher than on the European missionary.

This work attempts to show that the autonomous Methodist Church in Kenya owes its existence not only to the European missionaries, but to indigenous catechists, teachers, evangelists and ministers, whose zeal for evangelism made them become apostles among their own people.

Although this work is primarily concerned with the history of the Methodist Church, it will, no doubt, shed some light on the contribution made by other Christian bodies in Kenya. It will, perhaps, help us to see that many problems, failures as well as successes of the Methodist Church, are in fact no different from those that other churches have encountered. Since the basic problems of relevance of the Christian message are similar in most churches in Kenya because of identical cultural heritage of the African people, solutions to the

same basic problems will bear some resemblance. It is anticipated that this work will contribute, albeit in a modest way, to the general understanding of the foundations of Christianity in Kenya. The spirit of cooperation between Protestant churches is shown in chapter eight, and it shows the churches' ongoing concern for unity and ecumenism pertaining to missionary endeavours.

The beginnings of the Methodist Church in Kenya are traced to show how the Church was planted in Kenya with the help of the British missionaries. Methodism was brought to Kenya by Thomas Wakefield, the pioneer missionary who landed in Mombasa in 1862.

The traumatic experience of missionaries in their endeavour to extend their work to include the region of the Tana River is narrated in greater detail. It is not only a success story, but failures and setbacks are recounted as well. The heroic endeavour of the pioneers, both European and African, is given its due prominence.

Penetration of the missionary endeavour into the interior of Kenya (Meru) at the beginning of the century was encouraged by events which were beyond missionaries' control. It was the attempt of both entrepreneurs and colonial administrators to control the interior for their own gain that prompted the missionaries to seize the opportunity to seek new areas of operation for church expansion. The inevitable consequence of such a step was the open conflict between the two cultures that ensued, culminating in the cultural nationalism of 1930's. Behind the facade of conflict was the successful attempt by the missionaries to evangelize a more receptive people, whose clamour for

knowledge and medical care offered the missionaries a golden opportunity to make Christians out of them.

A deliberate effort was made to draw out information from oral sources to supplement missionary records and official government sources. This was done by way of interviewing some of the people who have been involved with the ongoing life of the Church. Considerable quantities of archival material, here in Kenya and in Great Britain, have helped me to narrate in a new way the story of the people called Methodists in Kenya.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM

The Methodist Church in Kenya, which was planted by the European missionaries and African converts through great sacrifices, has shown signs of growth and maturity through its indigenous leadership. The Church has in the past made a great contribution in the development of our country in the areas of education, medicine, and social as well as economic change. The Church has always been at the forefront in all areas of human development.

The question that is constantly posed is whether the Church has, in fact, the ability and vitality to continue to spearhead the development of a modern society. Is the Church changing with the times, or has it been overtaken by modern social change and reduced to an anachronism, a foreign and irrelevant institution? Has the Church in Kenya acquired an indelible African character, or has it continued to imitate the lifestyles of European Christianity?

This study which is specifically concerned with the Methodist Church in Kenya, though parallels with other churches will be found, attempts to provide historical background in which such problems could be discussed.

Unfortunately, a great deal of the history of the Methodist Church in Kenya is unwritten. What has been written or collected is inadequate, either scanty or onesided. In order to have a more complete

picture of Methodism in Kenya, it is imperative that attempts be made to put together both written and oral material. This work tries to perform this task within its stated limitation.

PURPOSE OF DISSERTATION

In my attempt to write a history of the Methodist Church in Kenya, I intend to explore some aspects of the history of the Church's work and mission in the light of the new outlook now current in African history. This new outlook focuses more on sociological factors that have shaped the interpretation of history in the African scene, rather than the traditional chronologically-oriented narration of events in history. In this study, I shall try to demonstrate how the Church, both in its doctrine and polity, affects society, and how events that take place in the communities permeate and influence the growth and development of the Church.

Although a number of books have been written by early Methodist missionaries concerning their work, which we will survey, I do not know of any study that deals with the history of the Methodist Church in Kenya per se. The existing work in this area is so fragmented that what can be found in books and articles is the missionaries' activities written at different times, and focusing mainly on their experiences in Christianizing East Africans. There is, therefore, a great need for an historical work which attempts to integrate the existing writings with newly acquired data from the archives, from correspondence, and information drawn from interviews with persons involved in the Church's development. There is also an added need to catalogue the information which is

derived especially from the interviews as a record for future reference.

To be able to write a representative history of the Methodist Church, I have tried to get behind the one-sided picture which emphasizes only the importance of the missionaries' work, leaving others almost completely out of the picture. Because of this problem, I have endeavoured to make a thorough study of the Methodist Church which may lead to a new interpretation of the Church's work, life and mission. I wish to recast the history of the Church from an African viewpoint, reinterpreting what has been done by others in this area as well as adding any new information that has emerged in the course of my research.

In such a study as this, five basic questions must be raised. These questions have been formulated for the purpose of establishing unifying themes on which the dissertation has been organized. They are:

1. What methods did the missionaries employ to convert Africans to Christianity?
2. What was the content of their message?
3. What made them appealing to those African converts who left their traditional religion in favour of Christianity?
4. How does Western Christianity relate to the African culture and African customs being researched?
5. What role did Africans play in developing and shaping of the Methodist Church in Kenya?

One important theme which I hope has emerged clearly is that whatever form the modern Kenyan Church has taken in its organization and doctrine, it is the result of the work and commitment of both African and European Christians. The evangelistic activities of both African

Christians and European missionaries were historically and socially conditioned by factors beyond their control. It is in this context that both successes and failures of the Methodist Church in Kenya must be seen. But out of their joint efforts something new was created.

From the very beginning Christian work of evangelism was carried out by African catechists and teachers. Since European missionaries were few and the area which they covered was large, it is not surprising to discover that in many places the continuing presence of witness to the gospel of Christ depended much more on the resident African catechist or teacher than on the European missionary. A satisfactory history of Christianity in Kenya will have to take into account the part played by African Christians.

By adding oral history to written documents and books about European missionaries, the contribution made by African converts to the establishment of their faith has been enhanced.

DEFINITION OF TERMINOLOGY

Methodist Church in Kenya:

The Conference of the Methodist Church in Kenya as stipulated by the "Deed of Church Order" and inaugurated by the Annual Conference in 1967.

United Methodist Free Churches:

One branch of Methodism in Great Britain, which came into being in 1836 through the successive association of a number of minor Methodist

bodies. This body established its overseas mission work in Kenya in 1862. It was united to other Methodist groups in Britain in 1932, thereafter known as the Methodist Church in Great Britain.

United Methodist Church:

A union of three Methodist bodies in Great Britain, namely, Methodist New Connexion, the Bible Christians, and United Methodist Free Church. The union took effect from July 16, 1907.

Kenya Church:

The Christian Church in Kenya comprised of all denominations, both Protestant and Roman Catholic.

African Traditional Religion:

Indigenous religion of the African peoples. To the African, religion is a whole way of life, and it permeates every aspect of being. African religious beliefs are absorbed from the community and woven into the life of an individual, so that the community becomes the custodian of faith.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several books have been written concerning Methodist missionary endeavours in Kenya, either by the missionaries themselves or their friends and relatives. They were intended for English readers who were instrumental in support of the missionary activities. We ought, under those circumstances, to allow a certain degree of exaggeration since

the authors intended to show that the mission was making considerable positive progress and was serving a worthy course of transforming peoples' lives. Let me attempt to review these works:

Robert Brewin, The Martyrs of Golbanti
(London: Crombie, 1901)

This is an account of two missionaries, the Rev. John Houghton and Mrs. Houghton, who met their tragic death while working among the Orma (Galla) people. The book gives a rather lengthy account of their lives in England and how they came to offer themselves as missionaries to East Africa. The rest of the book is a diary of the day-to-day events after they left England until their death. This book is especially helpful since it gives some account, though scanty, of African Christian leaders who were employed in evangelization. However even though some of the African Christians were slain with the Houghtons (Aba Shora, Huko, Kurte and Dida), they are not referred to as martyrs. Only the martyrdom of the Houghtons is elevated.

Robert Brewin, Memoirs of Mrs. Rebecca Wakefield
(London: Paternoster, 1879).

As the title indicates, this book is an edition of the memoirs of Rebecca Wakefield by her brother. Thomas Wakefield was the Methodist missionary who started the East Africa mission in 1862. Rebecca Brewin was married to Wakefield in England on December the second, 1869, and they soon departed for East Africa. Rebecca died at Ribe on July 16, 1873, after a period of only three years.¹

¹R. Brewin, The Martyrs of Gobanti (London: Crombie, 1901), p. 96.

The first four chapters of this book give a laborious account of the early childhood of Rebecca and a general account of life in England at that time. In the later chapters (especially chapter 12) is found a very useful and interesting account of everyday events at the station. Mrs. Wakefield endeavours to describe the coastal people whom she calls "Wanika" in a detailed way. The diagrams and pictures used in this book provide a very efficient way of showing what it used to be like on the East Coast during the nineteenth century.

The last chapters are a rather pious account of the last days of Rebecca Wakefield. They describe how she trusted in God in everything she did and how she kept her faith even in the midst of danger. Although it might have been an edifying book for English readers, there is very little that concerns the growth of the East Africa mission apart from the local gossip.

A. J. Hopkins, Trail Blazers and Road Makers
(London: Hooks, n.d.).

According to the author's confession, the purpose of this books was "to gather up into a connected story the history of our East Africa mission, that there may be placed in the hands of those who love this mission with the passion which comes only from the tragedy of unrealized visions, the story of the hopes and fears, the gloom and glory, of a little people's contribution to the making of a nation that has still to see its morning."²

²A. J. Hopkins, Trail Blazers and Road Makers (London: Hooks, n.d.), p. ii.

The author has portrayed lives of the missionaries who worked in the East Africa mission, with the purpose of showing the heroic adventures of the earlier generation of missionaries so that the young would-be-missionaries may glory in that heritage and "plan enterprises greater even than those their splendid fathers dreamed."³ It is no wonder that very little has been written here concerning African teachers, evangelists and ministers who laboured with those missionaries and who played a leading role in winning converts to Christianity.

The author, however, shows a certain respect for the local customs and for the African culture and religion in general. He envisages a time when the church in Africa will be an "African Church, self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing."⁴ He speaks about the necessity of having an indigenous African Church, adding that, "The European is essential to the building of the African Church. He is not, however, a permanent element of it, and he must take care not to make himself and all he stands for indispensable."⁵

It is comforting to see in the Methodist Church in Kenya that there were people who shared this vision from the early times. Whether they were taken seriously by their colleagues is another matter.

Charles New, Life, Wanderings and Labours in East Africa (London: Cass, 1971).

Charles New was the second missionary to the East Africa mission, joining Wakefield as a colleague at Ribe in 1863. He died during one of his expeditions to the Chagga country in 1875.

³Ibid.,

⁴Ibid., p. 146,

⁵Ibid., p. 147.

Apart from a very brief account of the life at Ribe Station, this book gives very little account of the author's ten years as a missionary. It omits important events such as the cholera epidemic of 1870 which devastated the coastal population. It does not mention the educational and linguistic achievements of New and his colleagues. It does not describe the reasons for the failure of the mission. After more than a decade of work at Ribe, there were only 40 converts attached to the mission.

New contributed to the geographical knowledge of East Africa. His visits to Kilimanjaro, Mount Kenya and the region around Nyandarua range enhanced European knowledge of the interior, and when combined with the contributions of others like Krapf, added up to a fair picture of the main features covered by modern Kenya and Northern Tanzania.⁶

New was a restless man and did not see the future of the Methodist Church at Ribe. He wanted to discover new areas wherein the Church could be planted with better chances of success.

Although New made a number of journeys, he did not see himself as an explorer, though it can be argued rather convincingly that he acted as one. For him, his primary objective was the spread of Christianity. He says:

Let me not be the discoverer of lands unknown, except as it may be necessary to the salvation of souls.⁷

⁶Charles New, Life, Wanderings and Labours in East Africa (London: Cass, 1971), p. 22.

⁷Ibid., p. 29.

Others were not so convinced about New's motives. A fellow missionary at Mombasa wrote, "but he seemed entirely led astray to seek for fame as a geographical explorer and an anti-slave trade advocate."⁸

The book, however, is important for its geographical details and adequate descriptions of places. His lack of formal education handicapped him; and since he had no special geographical or surveying training and had no historical-social background against which to match what he saw, his contribution was limited. He was, however, a careful observer and recorder; hence, small details did not escape his alert mind.

The new introduction to the third edition by Alison Smith gives background to the general social and historical conditions during New's time. It offers the reader general background for understanding the book.

J. H. Phillipson and R. H. B. Shapland, Tana Tales
(London: Hooks, n.d.).

This is not a literary masterpiece but the work of two missionaries who found the art of writing more burdensome than their preaching. Their objective was to show to their home readers what the life of a missionary who lived among strange people in a strange land looked like.

An attempt is made to describe the people who lived along the Tany River district, mainly the Wapokomo and Wagalla. The book reveals an aspect of the authors' prejudice in describing the customs and religion of Wapokomo, who are described as follows:

⁸Ibid.

tall and strong, but harmless and docile like great children, and like children too, wild and unmanageable when they lose their heads. Their religion is a tangle of Animism. They see spirits everywhere.⁹

Although half of the book describes wildlife around the Tana River, crocodiles, elephants, hippos and snakes, it gives some information on pre-christian societies of Tana River District. Very useful information about local Christians who were active in the mission is given. Edward Barissa, Lazarus Galgalla and Matthew Shakala seem to be the main characters in the unfolding drama.

E. S. Wakefield, Thomas Wakefield, Missionary and Geographical Pioneer in East Equatorial Africa (London: Religious Tract Society, 1904).

This is a biography of Thomas Wakefield which was written by his wife (by second marriage, in 1881) after the death of her husband. Apart from her own eyewitness account where she uses plural "we", most of the book is made up of Wakefield's diary entries and official letters that he wrote to the missionary headquarters in London.

The book has a very pious tone, and Mrs. Wakefield portrays her husband as a hero, a good and brave man. As she makes clear, Wakefield was a missionary "par excellence," and during the "whole of his career his glory was to save men from sin and its consequences."¹⁰ Although there are numerous citations and excellent description of journeys and activities, the book lacks awareness of the dramatic encounter of two cultures.

⁹J. D. Phillipson and R. H. B. Shapland, Tana Tales (London: Hooks, n.d.), p. 62.

¹⁰E. S. Wakefield, Thomas Wakefield (London: Religious Tract Society, 1904), p. 1.

No effort has been made to assess critically or interpret the information presented by Mr. Wakefield, hence, one is left to deal with a mass of data and the deeds of a great hero whose mistakes, if any, are not revealed.

An effort has been made to credit the contribution given by the local Christians who helped in running the outstations along the East Coast. The book, however, has useful dates and events which will help to put the data collected through investigative research into proper chronological sequence.

METHODOLOGY

Archival Research.

I have made a careful scrutiny and painstaking perusal of many documents, letters and magazines that are available in the archives, both in Great Britain and in Kenya in the process of my research for this project.

In Great Britain I did an elaborate investigation of Kenyan Methodism in the Methodist Missionary Society archives. This meant going over incoming and outgoing letters, articles in missionary magazines such as Missionary Echo and Kingdom Overseas, and any other published or unpublished articles that have a bearing on the East Africa Mission. I have also visited the archives of the Church Missionary Society (Anglican) for the purpose of ascertaining what working relationship, if any, the Methodist mission had with CMS. For the first two missionaries who had their articles published by the Royal

Geographical Society, Wakefield and New, I have endeavoured to make an enquiry into their geographical explorations and whether this helped or hindered the missionary course.

More research has been conducted in Kenya: in the National Archives in Nairobi, the University of Nairobi, St. Paul's United Theological College, Limuru, and the Methodist Church Archives.

Oral History Research.

Oral history is a way of collecting unwritten data from persons who have participated in or observed events of historical interest, or experienced a past way of life for which no written documentation is available. My purpose in using oral history methods is to help gain access to unwritten data for this dissertation as well as to preserve it for other researchers who would like to delve into the history of the Methodist Church in Kenya.

Twenty-five persons have been selected for personal interviews concerning their involvement in the work of the Methodist Church. Some of these people are past missionaries who worked in Kenya at one time and who have now retired in Great Britain. Others are local Christians who, in most cases, are first-generation Christians and were converted to Christianity from the traditional religion. This group includes both ministers and the laity.

It will be seen that more interviews have been conducted in Meru than at the Coast for two main reasons:

- (1) Meru is a relatively new mission field, having been opened fifty

years after the coastal mission. The beginning of the Christian church in Meru can still be described by eye-witnesses since there are first-generation Christians still living.

- (2) Meru is readily accessible to the writer, transportation being easily available. The knowledge of the district and the people by the writer made it easier for him to select and contact appropriate persons.
- (3) Five persons were interviewed from the Coast, but the writer realizes that this is insufficient. Only a bare beginning has been made in what could be done with oral history. The history will not be complete until many more people are interviewed, particularly in Pwani and Singwaya districts.

A tape recorder has been used in the interviews. The most useful tapes have been transcribed and kept for future reference. Each individual person interviewed has a vita form which gives information concerning the person's background. Questions were formulated to meet each individual case and were not necessarily made uniform.

Each available piece of information has been collected, including personal testimonies, sermons, speeches, articles and letters. In my circuit duties at Kaaga in 1970, I discovered that several local churches had a wealth of old documents such as letters, log books, marriage and baptismal registers lying in oblivion which have proved very useful in shedding some light on the Church's historical development. Some of this material will be catalogued and placed in the archives for future reference.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The Methodist Church did not work in isolation. It cooperated and was associated with other churches whenever possible. In this dissertation, an effort has been made to limit my research to the work of the Methodist Church, although I have developed in Chapter Eight some aspects of cooperation or partnership that have existed between the Methodist Church and other Church bodies.

A second limitation has been on the period covered. History has been sketched from the beginning of the Methodist mission in Kenya in 1862 up to the time the Church ceased to be a foreign mission area and became autonomous on January 7, 1967. This period covers roughly a hundred years, which is a large block of time in African History. The early part, up to 1900, has been covered in greater detail while the rest of the period has been explored rather in outline form.

A third limitation is in the use of documents (either written or oral) acquired for this purpose. I have been very selective and used only those that have a direct bearing on my research. Credit has been given to those documents used in the dissertation.

Finally, I must offer my apology. This dissertation does not cover every aspect of Methodist history. In particular, I have not been able to concentrate on personalities in the sense of giving biographical data of every person. There are so many personalities involved with the history of Methodism that it is not possible to mention them all. Due weight has been given to African pioneers when adequate information was available.

However, it is my hope that this dissertation will illuminate and uncover at least the outline history of the Methodist Church, and give others the impetus to write on other aspects of the Church that have not been touched.

As a historian, I have endeavoured to be objective and let facts speak for themselves. In the process of interpretation, however, no historian can claim absolute objectivity. I write about the Methodist Church in Kenya as a committed Christian who belongs to the cultural mould of present-day Kenya. At the same time I cannot escape the demands of honest research, critical appraisal of sources, recognition of biases, consideration of failures as well as successes and intelligent interpretation of comments, sayings and actions.

ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter Two traces the beginnings of the United Methodist Free Mission and gives a survey of the coastal people and their environment around 1860's. Information concerning the first trail blazers is given.

Chapter Three deals with the dramatic encounter between two divergent cultures, Western and African. It will seek to show how the conflicts that erupted as a result of that encounter were dealt with. The mission to the Wanyika (Wamijikenda) is treated in detail, while the lives of the pioneer missionaries Wakefield and New are highlighted. Mention is made of the African pioneers in this endeavour to communicate the message of the gospel to their own people. The setbacks of the missionary endeavour wrought by the slave trade are discussed and

assessed. The methods used by missionaries in evangelization will be reviewed as well as the attitudes of the missionaries towards local customs.

Chapter Four will dwell on the opening of the Tana River Mission mainly among the Galla (Orma and Wapokomo). This chapter endeavours to explore the attitudes of the Tana River people towards the foreigners and how such attitudes helped or hindered the reception of Christianity. The labours of individual missionaries will be assessed as well as the contribution of the local catechists and leaders. This chapter also wrestles with the problem of lack of success of the missionaries among the Galla people.

Chapter Five will deal with the planting and nurturing of Christian faith among the Wameru. It will also consider the first holocaust which struck the Meru mission at a very early stage, when five of the boys were burned to death. Was this a setback to the growth of the mission? Why were the Meru people reluctant to embrace the new faith? The contribution of prominent local leaders will be assessed.

Chapter Six deals with cultural nationalism, especially as it is embodied in resistance movements and the female initiation controversy of 1929. The main question to be posed is: How are indigenous customs compatible with Christianity?

Chapter Seven deals with the way education and medical work were used for evangelisation. This is an attempt to give reasons for the rapid growth of the Church during this period (mass conversions). Why did people flock to the mission stations in pursuit of education?

Why did they visit the mission health centers in utter disregard to their long entrenched customs?

Chapter Eight deals with the history of ecumenical endeavour and search for church union in Kenya. The chapter attempts to show the contribution of the Methodist Church, alongside other churches, to the problem of denominationalism and parochialism.

Chapter Nine is a concluding chapter which summarizes the arguments developed in the dissertation as well as making some suggestions on the role of the Church in a so-called "developing country."

Chapter II

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH IN KENYA

(1862 - 1932)

THE ORIGINS OF THE UNITED METHODIST FREE CHURCHES

The missionaries who came to Kenya in 1862 bringing the Christian gospel to the coastal tribes and the peoples in the Valley of the Tana River belonged to a small but zealous community of European Christians. They came under the auspices of the Foreign Mission Committee of the United Methodist Free Churches of Great Britain. The history of Methodism in that land, a history by no means simple, had its effects on the development of the church in Kenya. The United Methodist Free Church was perhaps the smallest and possibly the poorest of the many branches of Methodism in Great Britain at this time. The state of the Church in Great Britain had a direct bearing upon the Methodist Church in Kenya, since the resources and general outlook of church dictated the nature of its involvement in a foreign mission field. In order, therefore, to understand the beginnings of the Methodist Church in Kenya, a brief history of the Methodist Church in Great Britain will be useful.

The Methodist Church in Great Britain was born as a result of the Wesleyan revival of the eighteenth century. During Wesley's lifetime, he was able to mould the "Society of the people called Methodists" into one organized group, but soon after his death, the unity that existed within Methodism was threatened by splits and secessions even

as early as 1795.¹ Some of the splits were petty and parochial in outlook. In the first place, for example, there were the Protestant Methodists who were separated from the parent church for their dislike of an organ in Brunswick Chapel, Leeds.² The Arminian Methodists seceded as a result of a disagreement on the question of doctrine. Other groups, such as the Independent Primitive Methodists of Scarborough, the Welsh Methodists and the Temperance Methodists of Cornwall, were separated because of disagreements on the establishment of a theological college.³

Observing these separations across a great distance in time and space, we may too easily dismiss reasons for them as either silly or trivial. Certainly some of the disagreements look as if they were prompted by personal rivalries.

The main causes of various splits were, however, not so simple. For the purpose of this study, the causes may be characterized as the rights of local churches or private individuals against central authority.⁴ Most of the agitation was for greater autonomy in various aspects of church life, or as it has been put, it was for democracy, the government of the Church, locally or connexionally, by the rank and file of the membership exercising their priesthood. . . .⁵

To make a long story short, it was the desire of various branches of Methodism, some of which were small, to seek unity with

¹Oliver A. Beckerlegge, The United Methodist Free Churches (London: Epworth Press, 1957), p. 15.

²Ibid., p. 13. ³Ibid., p. 15. ⁴Ibid. ⁵Ibid., p. 15.

other Methodist groups. The Wesley Association and the Wesleyan Reform Movement wanted unity on New Testament principles.⁶ Negotiations which began in 1851 were surreptitiously continued up until May 1857 when a committee made up of the negotiating bodies resolved:

That subject to the basis of Union and the other arrangements that have been mutually adopted by the special committee of the Methodist Reformers and of the Wesleyan Methodist Association, the said committees mutually declare that the proposed amalgamation of the churches represented by the said committees has now been effected.⁷

It should not be assumed that all churches entered that amalgamation. Indeed the spirit of independence prevailed. Each congregation was at liberty to join the Union or remain outside.⁸ Some chose to remain outside the Union, but those who elected to join the Union had their representatives meet on 29th July, 1857 to inaugurate the first conference of the United Methodist Free Churches.⁹ (U.M.F.C.)

In the ensuing years, a spirit of unity prevailed within the Methodist ranks. The New Connexion, another Methodist body, in 1863 sent out a resolution seeking unity among sister conferences. It drew a favourable reply from the U.M.F.C.¹⁰ The New Connexion was encouraged to seek opinions concerning unity among other liberal Methodist bodies.¹¹ Nothing substantial came out of this endeavour, although some understanding was reached concerning the intent of liberal groups to seek unity in earnest.

⁶Ibid., p. 40.

⁷W. J. Townsend, Story of Methodist Union (London: Crombie, n.d.), p. 90.

⁸Ibid., p. 91. ⁹Beckerlegge, p. 45. ¹⁰Ibid., p. 96.

¹¹Townsend, p. 94.

The movement that led to the 1907 Union began with 1901 Ecumenical Conference. This was a Conference that had succeeded in drawing the Methodist Churches together.¹²

Arising from that Conference a committee composed of three Methodist bodies, New Connexion, the Bible Christians and the U.M.F.C., was formed with a view to working out the basis of Union. At long last the uniting assembly was held on July 16th, 1907 at Wesley's Chapel, City Road, London.¹³ The new union was, henceforth, called United Methodist Church.

It was not until 1932 that a Union comprised of almost all Methodist groups in Great Britain was effected. This union included the Wesleyan Methodists, the Primitive Methodists and the United Methodists. It was a great achievement within Methodism in Great Britain since Methodists were able to speak once again with one voice and relate to other Christian churches as one body. It was a heroic achievement which was to characterize Christianity in modern times as churches strive for ecumenism and wider unity.¹⁴

In Kenya the great event of Methodist Union in Great Britain was warmly celebrated by the missionaries. By the courtesy of the Anglican Bishop of Mombasa, a thanksgiving service was held at All Saints Cathedral, Nairobi, the preacher being the Rev. C. E. Mortimer, himself a Methodist missionary. Another service was held at

¹²Beckerlegge, p. 98. ¹³Ibid., p. 103.

¹⁴Methodist Recorder, A Weekly Newspaper of the Methodist Church in Great Britain (October 16, 1952).

St. Andrew's Church Nairobi for the same purpose.¹⁵ Anglican and Presbyterian missionaries were invited to celebrate the Methodist Union.

This fact shows that whatever happened within British Methodism, the Methodist Church in Kenya was directly affected. The Methodist Church in Kenya was, in fact, an overseas district of the British Conference. What this means in practical terms is that in 1862 the Church in Kenya was planted by the U.M.F.C. By 1907 the Union in Great Britain brought the Methodist Church in Kenya into the United Methodist Church tutelage. The 1932 Union again put the church under direct responsibility of the Methodist Missionary Society (M.M.S.) in London, the missionary organ of British Methodism. This body continued to support the work of the Methodist Church in Kenya in both personnel and finances. The British Conference was responsible for the administration of the church in Kenya; hence, district chairmen were appointed from time to time to oversee the church and to make periodic reports to the authorities in London. It was not until the Methodist church in Kenya became autonomous in 1967 that indigenous leadership took over the general administration of the church.

In order to understand the beginning of the Methodist Mission in Kenya, it is necessary to have a quick review of the peoples who lived along the East African Coast around that time. This will help us to understand why missionaries succeeded in some areas and failed in other

¹⁵Methodist Missionary Society, Problems and Progress in Kenya (London: 1932), p. 99.

areas. Certainly the attitude of the people was different from one area to the other.

THE INHABITANTS OF THE COASTAL REGIONS OF KENYA

(1850 - 1900)

Throughout Kenya and in parts of Tanzania there are peoples who claim to have originated from an area called "Shungwaya". This is an area which seems to have been a dispersal center for a number of peoples of East Africa.¹⁶ Shungwaya was probably located in Southern Somalia, and if the hypothesis is correct, the dispersal from there took place around the twelfth or thirteenth century.¹⁷ The dispersal might have been caused by Islamic pressure, whether direct or indirect. It is certainly established that in the early seventeenth century there was an unrest among the Gallas, and they wandered along the coast as far as Kilifi Creek north of Mombasa.¹⁸ It is possible that they unsettled other peoples who in turn displaced even others. Some tribes such as the Kamba, Kikuyu, Mbeere and Meru seem to have dispersed into the interior as a result of this general movement of the peoples. Traditions of many coastal communities point to Shungwaya as their original land, from where they were driven by the Gallas.¹⁹ The Wanyika (Wamijikenda)

¹⁶History of East Africa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), I, 114.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Gideon Were and Derek Wilson, East Africa Through a Thousand Years (London: Evans Brothers, 1969), p. 79.

and Wapokomo are typical victims of Galla and Somali aggression. They claim their descent from Shungwaya.²⁰

Up until 1865 the Tana River basin was dominated by the Gallas. But by this time they were at the mercy of Wakamba and Wamaasai, who proved to be stronger.²¹ They had been completely defeated by the Somali from the North. They were moving more and more towards the south.

The Catholics had attempted to work among the Ethiopian Gallas. During the Sixteenth Century the Capuchin Antoine d' Abbadie was described as "le vrai fondateur de la mission des Gallas."²² There was a legend developing in Europe that there existed a large number of Galla societies with well-organized monarchies. European missionaries believed that because of this supposedly large number distributed over a wide geographical area, the evangelization of the Galla peoples ought to be given a very high priority in view of its likely influence to other parts of eastern Africa.²³

The modern Christian work in Kenya began at the Coast in 1844. The earliest missionary society was the Church Missionary Society (CMS), a Church of England society that was founded in 1799 in England. Their first missionary to East Africa was Dr. Johann Ludwig Krapf, the son of a Wurtemberg farmer who received his education at Tübingen. Being a

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²J. A. Kieran, "A Route to the Galla," in B. A. Ogot (ed.) Hadith 3 (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1971), p. 30.

²³Ibid.

German Lutheran of pietistic background, he was trained for missionary work at Basel Protestant Institution.²⁴

Before coming to Kenya, Dr. Krapf had worked in Ethiopia in the Shoa province in central Abyssinia with the Abyssinian Mission for a period of five years.²⁵ While still in Ethiopia, Krapf made journeys which brought him into contact with the northern Gallas. Krapf admired the Galla people so much that he believed that they were the main and most progressive nation in eastern Africa. He estimated them to be between six and eight million in number. He also believed that their traditional religion was more developed than that of other people in eastern Africa.²⁶

Krapf thought that conversion of the Galla people to Christianity would be the key to bringing Christian civilization to Eastern Africa.²⁷ Since the Gallas called themselves "Ormas", Krapf referred to their country as "Ormania". The name signified the character of the inhabitants. They were supposed to be brave and strong people.²⁸ They were exclusively a pastoral people and considered agricultural people inferior to them.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵W. B. Anderson, The Church in East Africa 1840 - 1974 (Dodoma: Central Tanganyika Press, 1977), p. 2, cf. History of East Africa, I, 242.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Charles New, Life, Wanderings and Labours in Eastern Africa (London: Cass, 1971), p. 270.

Following his marriage in Egypt in 1842, Krapf attempted to return to Ethiopia without success.²⁹ When he found that he could not return to Ethiopia, he tried to find an alternative route through the south. In 1844, he sailed to Zanzibar under the auspices of CMS.³⁰ He befriended Seyyid Said, the Sultan of Zanzibar, who in turn issued him a passport. From Zanzibar Krapf moved to Mombasa, where two years later he was joined by his colleague, Rev. J. Rebmann.³¹

After eighteen years in eastern Africa, Krapf went home and wrote his famous book,³² which influenced Mr. Charles Cheetham, the connexional treasurer of the Methodist Conference, who brought it to the attention of the missionary committee of the United Methodist Free Churches. The committee was inspired by the ideas contained in the book. Dr. Krapf, who at that time was residing in Europe, was contacted and invited to England for an interview. The result of that interview was that, on November 14, 1860, the committee made a decision to begin work in East Africa,³³ especially to reach the Gallas.

With other African peoples, the Gallas had the notion of the Supreme Being (God) whom they called "Waka".³⁴ Since the same word was

²⁹History of East Africa, I, 242.

³⁰New, p. 2.

³¹Ibid., p. 4.

³²J. L. Krapf, Travels, Researches and Missionary Labours during an Eighteen Years' Residence in Eastern Africa (London: Trubner, 1860).

³³E. S. Wakefield, Thomas Wakefield (London: Religion Tract Society, 1904), p. 16.

³⁴New, p. 273.

also applied to the sky, it seems as if God was associated with the firmament, his dwelling place.

The Southern Gallas along the Tana River were divided into two tribes, the Baretuma and Harusi.³⁵ Men could not marry from their own tribes but had to get wives from the other tribe, thus avoiding in-breeding.

Living side by side with the Gallas along the Tana River were the Wapokomo. They were akin to the Wanyika in physical appearance, habits, dress and in language.³⁶ As earlier conjectured, they probably share the same lineage, having both originated from Shungwaya. Wapokomo were agriculturists as well as hunters. They cultivated maize, rice, tobacco and bananas. They supplemented their farm products by occasional hunting. Even though they were subservient to the Gallas, and were at times reduced to serfs, they were well disposed, good-natured and very friendly to foreigners.³⁷ They made use of the new soil brought to the bank of the river bi-annually by the flooding of the river. They probably inhabited an area of about one hundred and fifty square miles, with a population of about fifteen thousand people.³⁸

The Maasai were another tribe that had contact with coastal peoples. During the nineteenth century the Maasai not only terrified many of their neighbours and the coastal people, as a result of plundering

³⁵Ibid., p. 274.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., p. 277.

³⁸H. R. A. Philp, A New Day in Kenya (London: World Dominion Press, 1936), p. 123.

power, but they were also engaged in civil wars.³⁹ Civil wars were fought mainly between the two groups of Maasai, the pastoral Maasai (the Purko) and the Kwavi, who were mainly agriculturists.⁴⁰ The end result of the protracted wars was the defeat of the Kwavi. From the time missionaries arrived in East Africa they had heard about the Purko Maasai who were terrorizing the coastal peoples.

It seems also possible to conjecture that it was the Kwavi fugitives from Kilimanjaro area who, in their desperation and defeat, raided the coast after the middle of the nineteenth century, and this was eventually blamed on the Maasai, giving the Purko Maasai a bad reputation.⁴¹ Charles New comments that the Maasai were:

. . . the Greeks and Trojans of Eastern Africa and are the terror and admiration of most of her tribes.⁴²

He was certainly commenting on the raids that were carried out by the Maasai along the Coast. The Maasai believed that all cattle belonged to them alone and would conduct raids against other tribes with devastating effect. While they were quite friendly to agricultural tribes, those who kept cattle were in danger of not only being robbed of them, but even killed for holding them.⁴³ For a long time the Maasai

³⁹Zoe Marsh and G. W. Kingsworth, A History of East Africa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 132.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹History of East Africa, I, 307.

⁴²New, p. 469.

⁴³Ibid., Cf. John S. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy (London: Heinemann, 1969), p. 50.

dominated the whole of Kenya west of the Tana River, including the coast after the collapse of the Galla in the middle of nineteenth century.⁴⁴

The pressure of their raids fixed many boundaries from Kisii to Kilimanjaro, extending as far as the Tana.⁴⁵

Around 1870, the Wanyika were protecting themselves against the Maasai attacks by living either on hill tops or down in the valleys far from the reach of the Maasai.⁴⁶ William Jones, a local C.M.S. catechist, once commented:

"... all East Coast of Africa was in expectation of a mighty deliverer from the Maasai, the common foe".⁴⁷

The Maasai had a democratic form of government even though they had a chief called "Laibon". Even though there was no single "laibon" at any one given time, Mbatian became the undisputed leader of the "Maasai proper" by around 1884.⁴⁸ In 1860 Dr. Krapf described the Maasai in the following terms:

The Maasai occupy large plains in the interior of Eastern Africa which extend from two degrees north of the Equator to about four degrees south of it. The name Maasai is given to them by the tribes of the Coast. Their manner of life is nomadic, and where they find water and grass, there they often encamp for months together. . . . They are dreaded as warriors, laying all waste with fire and sword, so that the weaker tribes do not venture to resist them in the open field, but leave them in possession of their herds, and seek only to save themselves by the quickest possible flight.⁴⁹

⁴⁴H. O. Weller, A Short History of Kenya Colony (Nairobi: C.M.S. Bookshop, 1942), p. 19.

⁴⁵Ibid. ⁴⁶Ogot, p. 63.

⁴⁷Jones to Wright, August 7, 1878, C.M.S. Archives, London in file marked C A5/014.

⁴⁸History of East Africa, I, 306. ⁴⁹Krapf, p. 236.

Like other East Africans, the Maasai had the notion of a Supreme being whom they called "Engai" (God). There had to be a mediator between God and the people, hence the role of the "Neiterkob" or a lesser god, who had to be supplicated and at times appeased, especially during natural calamities such as drought or pestilence.⁵⁰ Their moral laws were restricted by tribal barriers; hence killing outside the tribe was not murder but an act of vengeance.

The fear of the Maasai saved the tribes in the interior of Kenya from slave traders. No one would have dared to go through Maasai land. So, safer routes to Uganda were used, normally through Tanganyika. The Maasai slowed the colonization efforts of the British government, and the British administrators were careful not to provoke them to war.⁵¹ They were never conquered, but meaningless treaties were made with them in an effort to secure land for British settlers. Unfortunately their treaties were never observed by the British, and there were endless problems between the Maasai and the British administration.⁵²

The obvious victims of the Maasai raids along the coast were the Wanyika or people of the wilderness. They were to be found along the northern part of the coast region. Wanyika are today known as "Wamijikenda" a term which means literally, "people of the nine towns."⁵³ In the nineteenth century they were divided into at least nine sub-tribes, a fact which points to their common origin and heritage.⁵⁴

⁵⁰R. Brewin, The Martyrs of Golbanti (London: Crombie, 1901), p. 99

⁵¹Philp, p. 56.

⁵²Ibid., p. 57.

⁵³New, p. 93.

⁵⁴A.J.Hopkins, Trail Blazers and Road Makers (London: Hook, n.d.), p. 9.

They probably had a common ancestry with the Wapokomo and upcountry tribes such as the Kamba, Meru and Kikuyu, all of whom were supposed to have dispersed from the Shungwaya.⁵⁵ The nine sub-tribes of the Wanyika were: Watai, Waduruma, Warabai, Waribe, Wakambe, Wajibana, Wachonyi, Wakauma and Wagiriama.⁵⁶

Adjacent to them and occupying the Shimba Hills were the Wadigo. The Wadigo claimed the whole of the coastal region south of Mombasa on the ground that they were, in fact, the first people to occupy it.⁵⁷ Even at this stage they had a markedly Muslim influence and had developed a type of limited chieftainship as opposed to the rule by the council of elders characteristic of other coastal tribes.⁵⁸

Like other African peoples, the Wanyika had a pronounced notion of the supreme being whom they called "Mulungu" (God). Mulungu was known to be the creator and sustainer of the universe.⁵⁹ They worshipped and revered God in their traditional way. They had no quarrel with those who talked about God even if they used new language or terminology. They knew that God was in perfect control of every event and happening. They earnestly believed in the life after death with its moral implication, that a good person here on earth would join the ancestral spirits and ultimately become an immortal being.⁶⁰

⁵⁵History of East Africa, I, 90.

⁵⁶New, p. 92.

⁵⁷Ogot, p. 86.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹New, p. 103.

⁶⁰Hopkins, p. 12f.

Like all other African people, those who lived along the coast of Kenya had an established religious practice whose main tenets can be summarized as:

1. Setting apart holy places and objects such as shrines, graves, hills and mountains, rivers and lakes. These places were set aside for offerings and sacrifices and for ceremonial rituals.
2. Observing values and morals which safeguarded the life of the people in their relationship with one another and the world around them.
3. Having religious leaders or officials who conducted religious matters such as worship, ceremonies and divination. These people who were specialists and experts in religious matters, held offices as priests, rainmakers, ritual elders, prophets and diviners.⁶¹

These religious beliefs and practices hinged on the African beliefs in a supreme being (God). When they were confronted with new ideas brought by foreigners who visited them, elders urged their people to hold fast to traditional customs and especially their religious practices. Foreigners confused African people with animists, without understanding that most African societies had a very pronounced belief in God. This lack of understanding will be encountered during the early period of the missionary era. It would be useful at this stage, however, to look at the foreigners with whom the coastal peoples associated.

⁶¹Mbiti, pp. 1-5.

FOREIGN INVADERS OF THE EAST AFRICAN COAST

Facing the Indian Ocean, the land of Kenya lies open to the whole seafaring world--Arabia to the north, India to the east, and (in the days before the Suez Canal) Europe by a long route around the Cape of Good Hope. Throughout history this land has attracted a variety of peoples. It is a meeting place of diverse cultures and religions. Here the indigenous inhabitants have had significant encounters with Arabs and with Europeans.⁶²

Arabs.

The term "Arab" is applied to the immigrant Arabs of pure descent who had originated from Yemen, Hadramaut and Muscat. From earliest times Southern Arabia was the market for goods from the east, and the north monsoon brought dhows from Arabia to East African Coast.⁶³ By the thirteenth century, trade between Arabia and East Africa was at its full swing.⁶⁴

The Arabs had settled along the coast, establishing coastal towns as early as the eighth century. Some of their important towns were Mombasa, Malindi and Lamu.⁶⁵ Trade between Kenya and Arabia included spices, ivory, skins, tortoise shells, gold and slaves from Kenya. Traders brought with them cloth and firearms from Arabia. Since Arabs

⁶²Philp, p. 126.

⁶³Marsh and Kingsworth, p. 18.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 22.

were ardent Muslims by faith, they introduced Islam along the Kenyan coast. Since the slave trade later became the most conspicuous and profitable business, Arabs endeavoured to open the interior as a way of enlarging their sphere of influence.

The Island of Zanzibar like the Kenyan coast was settled by Arabs. They established towns in the island, the most important of which was Zanzibar.⁶⁶ In the nineteenth century Zanzibar became the most important town on the East African coast when Sultan Seyyid Said of Muscat moved his capital from Oman to Zanzibar in 1840.⁶⁷ The Sultan then consolidated his dominion over the Arab-settled towns along the east coast from Zanzibar. Zanzibar developed into a commercial center between East Africa and Asia, and between Europe and North America. It also developed into a gateway to the east and central African mainland for European explorers, geographers and missionaries.⁶⁸

Since the British were the strongest naval power in the Indian Ocean in the nineteenth century, the Sultan of Zanzibar found it profitable to cultivate friendship with them.⁶⁹

The growing trade between Zanzibar and European nations and the United States of America led those nations to establish their consulates at Zanzibar to watch over their interests. In 1837 the U.S.A. appointed

⁶⁶History of East Africa, I, 212.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 214.

⁶⁸Roland Oliver, The Missionary Factor in East Africa (London: Longmans, 1952), p. 1.

⁶⁹History of East Africa, I, 228.

a consul to Zanzibar. The British appointed theirs in 1841, and France did the same in 1844.⁷⁰

Along the coast, the Arabs intermarried with the Africans producing the Swahili people. There are also some indigenous people of pure African descent who claim to be Waswahili. Waswahili shared the faith of Islam and even the mercantile way of life of the Arabs.⁷¹ By the third generation most of them probably spoke a new language, Swahili. Swahili language was basically Bantu but contained many Arabic words.⁷² By the fourteenth century, the distinction between Arab and African customs was becoming less and less marked, thus paving the way for a common culture that was emerging.⁷³ Swahili continued to be a spoken language while Arabic was the written language. Swahili emerged as a written language somewhere between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The Waswahili were instrumental in the opening up of the interior in that for a long time they were the transport agents, and it was through them that the early explorers and missionaries were able to penetrate into the interior.⁷⁴ Perhaps their greatest contribution was their language, Kiswahili, which has become the lingua franca of eastern Africa. Waswahili were not only porters and interpreters. Together with the Arabs, the Waswahili were the landowners and slave holders. They were nominal Muslims and whenever possible, they lived in small

⁷⁰Ibid., I, 229.

⁷¹Marsh and Kingsworth, p. 24.

⁷²Were and Wilson, p. 17.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Philp, p. 128.

communities in towns, their faith holding them together as one community.⁷⁵

Representing the early generation of European missionaries, Charles New was biased against Waswahili. He had one dictum for the Waswahili:

Before they can be of any service, they require to be civilized themselves, and the civilization they require is that which Christianity alone can impart. While they remain Muhammadans, there is little hope for them.⁷⁶

Such a statement by New can be explained by the cultural mould that characterized Victorian England. To missionaries of his generation, civilization was congruous to Christianity, hence his unsympathetic tone against Islam.

The Europeans.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to appear on the East African scene. Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese explorer, reached Mombasa on 7th April, 1498 on his way to India.⁷⁷ He was sent by King Manoel of Portugal, who had succeeded to the throne in 1495.⁷⁸ The Portuguese King had the stated objective to spread Christianity as well as to acquire the riches of the East.

At Mombasa, Vasco da Gama met with considerable hostility which made him change his plans for staying there. He moved on to Malindi where he was warmly received.⁷⁹ After anchoring for a few days at

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 129.

⁷⁶New, p. 70.

⁷⁷History of East Africa, I, 134.

⁷⁸Weller, p. 38.

⁷⁹Were and Wilson, p. 26.

Malindi, he proceeded to India. For over two hundred years the Portuguese remained very active in the Indian Ocean. They occupied Mombasa and Malindi in 1505, and in 1507 they conquered Lamu. In 1586 the Arabs re-conquered Mombasa, but the Portuguese in retaliation recaptured it in 1592 and fortified it in 1593.⁸⁰

The attitude of the Portuguese toward the Arabs was one of hatred, based on religious discord. The Iberian Peninsula had been ruled by Muslim Arabs for nearly eight hundred years. It was not until 1491 that the effort to oust the Arabs from Europe succeeded.⁸¹ Since the Arabs had invaded Europe, bringing with them an alien faith and forcing Europeans to accept Islam, some of the Portuguese felt that it was now their turn to force Arabs to become Christians.⁸² Even though we do not have any record of Arabs who were forcibly converted, there existed a degree of religious intolerance between the two communities.

The first Portuguese visitors had hoped to make contact with Prester John, a legendary Christian King who was supposed to rule a large part of the interior of north-east Africa.⁸³ They imagined that this powerful monarch would help them in their struggle against Muslims. But Prester John was never located.

Portuguese conquistadores and traders settled along the coastal town. There were sporadic visits by missionaries, even though no sustained evangelistic work was undertaken.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 30.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 24.

⁸²Ibid., p. 25.

⁸³Ibid.

The best known Portuguese missionary, who made his appearance in Kenya on his way to India in 1542, was Francis Xavier.⁸⁴ He had fruitful conversation with Muslim leaders in Malindi. In 1564 the Portuguese viceroy in India ordered the Gospel preached around Mombasa. In 1567 the Augustinian Friars established a monastery in Mombasa, and in 1598 three priests were posted at Lamu; but their work lasted for only a few years. It is recorded that Augustinian Friars built a Church in Mombasa in the seventeenth century and claimed to have had six hundred converts from the local inhabitants.⁸⁵

Ruins of some of the Portuguese churches in and around Mombasa remain a witness to the Portuguese presence along the Kenya coast. The Portuguese missionaries did not make any attempt to penetrate into the interior. Their work among the Muslims was not successful because of the hatred that existed between the two communities. As a matter of fact, the hostility of the Arabs forced the Portuguese to confine themselves mostly to Fort Jesus, a fort that was built in 1592 (now kept as a museum) in order to ward off any attacks by the Arabs.⁸⁶

By 1630 the power of the Portuguese was waning. From this point there was a power struggle between the Arabs and the Portuguese until the latter were completely expelled in 1729. The East Coast then became that domain of the Sultan of Muscat.⁸⁷ When the Portuguese left, they

⁸⁴Kenya Churches Handbook (Kisumu: Evangel Publishing House, 1973), p. 29.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 21.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 29.

⁸⁷Philp, p. 3.

had not established any lasting Christian heritage. They lived in their own communities and built their own churches which were served by Portuguese priests.⁸⁸ When the modern Christian era began, there was no trace of Portuguese Christianity except for Fort Jesus and some ruins of church buildings.

As the Portuguese power was waning, other European powers were converging on the East Coast of Africa. The first British ship to enter East Africa was "Edward Bonadventura" in 1591.⁸⁹

This ship was one of the three vessels engaged in seeking a trade route to India. This adventure led to the formation of the East India Company in 1600. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the Portuguese traders along the East African coast were being replaced by the British, Dutch and French traders who were soon followed by American and German traders. These were followed by scientists, explorers and geographers who were fascinated by the stories they had heard. There were also philanthropists and missionaries whose interest was to help people out of their misery and exploitation by slave traders. The Victorians regarded themselves as the custodians of civilization, industry and progress. They believed they had a mission to travel far and wide, to civilize the "backward" parts of the world.⁹⁰

There were four main reasons for the Christian involvement with sub-sahara Africa during the last two hundred years:

⁸⁸ Were and Wilson, p. 30.

⁸⁹ Philp, p. 3.

⁹⁰ Were and Wilson, p. 128.

1. To mitigate and remedy the effects of slave trade on African communities.⁹¹
2. To share the Christian faith to people who had not been presented with the truth of the gospel.⁹²
3. To encourage legitimate trade and commerce which would be beneficial to the mother country and to the indigenous people.⁹³
4. To bring civilization through social and economic revolution, with full realization that it was the Church that was the custodian of true civilization.⁹⁴

It was not by accident that the first period of missionary endeavour was male dominated. This period was characterized by efforts to secure allegiance and assistance from elders and chiefs. Missionaries of this era also lived dangerously by wandering around in search of strategic points or locations for the establishment of mission centers. They did manual work, putting buildings and making the necessary infrastructure for their operations. Few missionary societies would have contemplated sending out women in such circumstances. It is within this framework that the endeavours of pioneers like Krapf are to be understood. Not till 1869 did wives begin to accompany their missionary-husbands to assist in the work of the mission.

⁹¹R. E. Kendall, The End of an Era: Africa and the Missionary (London: S.P.C.K., 1978), p. 23.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Oliver, p. 16.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 20.

Dr. J. L. Krapf, formerly a missionary in Abyssinia, was sent to Mombasa by the C.M.S. in 1844. Two years later Krapf was joined by a fellow German missionary by the name of Johannes Rebmann, who also worked under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society. The two lonely missionaries moved their station from Mombasa to Rabai Mpia, which is fifteen miles from Mombasa. At Rabai the missionaries worked among the Wa Wamijikenda people to whom they hoped to impart the truth of the gospel.⁹⁵ From Rabai they hoped to establish mission stations to the north with the fervent desire of reaching the Gallas.⁹⁶ In preparation for the task ahead, they visited villages, occasionally making exploratory journeys into the interior. They learned more about people of the mainland from Arab and Waswahili traders who travelled far and wide into the interior.⁹⁷

Krapf wrote the first Swahili dictionary and translated some portions of the Bible into Swahili, Nyika and Kamba languages.⁹⁸ He also studied Kigalla, Kitala and Kiduruma.

The coast was resistant to the Gospel as well as being an unhealthy place to live. The missionaries were determined to look for a more appropriate area inland. Rebmann visited Usambara and Chagga

⁹⁵Marsh and Kingsworth, p. 51.

⁹⁶Anderson, p. 4.

⁹⁷Marsh and Kingsworth, p. 52.

⁹⁸Kenya Churches Handbook, p. 31.

countries and became the first European to see Mt. Kilimanjaro, in 1848.⁹⁹ Krapf travelled to the north and was the first European to see Mt. Kenya. Such journeys were yet to prove useful in the opening up of East Africa to the outside world. Krapf left East Africa owing to ill health in 1853, only to return later on in 1862, leading the Methodist pioneer missionaries.¹⁰⁰

In the nineteenth century, Europe still regarded Africa as the "dark continent". To the missionaries, such darkness was the result of lack of illumination by the Gospel truth.¹⁰¹ Their source of joy was the evangelization of Africa; this task was begun through individual missionaries who gave themselves for service to unknown lands, supported by the missionary societies.

The first missionaries were following the Livingstonian legacy. David Livingstone was not only regarded by Europeans as the "missionary par excellence" but was also acclaimed as "the greatest man who ever trod the soil of Africa."¹⁰² His greatness lay in his carrying of his flaming torch into "darkest" Africa and pricking the conscience of the West that enriched itself through the slave trade. He envisioned that this "open sore" could only be healed by substituting for the illegitimate trade a

⁹⁹ Anderson, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ History of East Africa, I, 242.

¹⁰¹ Joseph Kirsop, Life of Robert Moss Ormerod (London: Crombie, 1901), p. 20-21.

¹⁰² Hopkins, p. 1.

legitimate one.¹⁰³ He advocated promotion of commerce along with Christianity and civilization. To Livingstone, Christian missionary enterprise had to be triangular, propagating the foundation of religion, then agriculture and commerce on the one hand, and civilization in the broadest sense on the other.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³Oliver, p. 11.

¹⁰⁴D. Livingstone, Missionary Travels and Experience in South Africa (London: 1857), p. 672.

Chapter III

THE MISSION TO WANYIKA (WAMIJIKENDA)

Krapf returned to Mombasa in 1862 to help Thomas Wakefield, a United Methodist Free Church missionary, to establish a mission station near Rabai at a place called Ribe.¹ Along with Wakefield came Woolner, who stayed for only three months and found it impossible to stand the harsh climate.² Accompanying Wakefield were two Swiss missionaries from the Institute of Krischona, S. Elliker and J. F. Graf. These two were on an independent mission and were not part of the Methodist mission.³ The two Swiss missionaries, however, soon returned home because of bad health. Wakefield was a solitary worker after Dr. Krapf's departure until Charles New's arrival in 1863.

The missionaries of the United Methodist Free Churches were thus able to begin work among the coastal people (Wanyika) and among the Wapokomo and Wagalla of the Tana River. Coming from the smallest Methodist group in Great Britain, their resources were meager in both money and personnel. They could not, therefore, expect to do much, neither could they spread very far from their first station at Ribe. They found the population of the coastal people small and scattered.

¹The Church Missionary Intelligencer, CMS Missionary Journal, (August 1862), 338.

²A. J. Hopkins, Trail Blazers and Road Makers (Londong: Hooks, n.d.), p. 3.

³E. S. Wakefield, Thomas Wakefield (Londong: Religious Tract Society, 1904), p. 19.

The missionaries would have wanted to move to more populous people elsewhere if they had the personnel. Even with all odds against them, they nevertheless persevered in their endeavour to reach the local inhabitants who were not only poor but subservient to the more powerful Arab culture of the coast with its slave system.⁴

As Kendall points out, allowance must be made for the cultural shock of Europeans coming to Africa for the first time and being confronted by a tribal life unaffected by western sophistication.⁵ Furthermore, they were not meeting a highly developed African society but one that had already been weakened and corrupted by the slave system.⁶

On the whole they found that their presence among the Wamijikenda was tolerated, and kindness was bestowed upon them. Hospitality was extended to them, but they found that they could arouse little interest in the main purpose of their mission. People were not anxious to listen to a new religion. They displayed an atmosphere of indifference concerning religious conversations.⁷

The pioneer missionaries of the Methodist Church, Thomas Wakefield and Charles New, never wavered from their primary objective of establishing a mission among the Gallas.⁸ It was only after a long time and much toil that the later Methodists turned to the more receptive Wapokomo, thus

⁴R. Kendall, Charles New and the East Africa Mission (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1978), p. 65.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Joseph Kirsop, Life of Robert Moss Ormerod (London: Crombie, 1901), p. 40.

abandoning the Galla mission altogether, as will be shown later on.⁹

The Foreign Mission Committee discovered much too late that they had made perhaps the most costly mistake by their resolution of 1870 which rejected New's proposal to consider Chagga as a mission field:

In the judgement of this committee, the labours of our missionaries in East Africa should be confined to the Galla Country, and that for the present no attempt should be made to commence a mission at Chagga.¹⁰

One wonders how much more time was spent in the preparation of the legendary Galla mission than with the organizing of the already constituted missions. The first baptisms of converts did not take place until July, 1870.¹¹ We should not, however, forget that it was not easy to do any Christian work along the East Coast. This had been a predominantly Muslim area for a long time, and many attempts to thwart the effort of Christian missions must have been made by the Arabs.¹²

The establishment of a mission station at Jomvu, in the middle of a Muslim community, was a further provocation to the Muslim inhabitants. This station, which was established in 1878, proved to be a source of trouble and did not grow to any appreciable strength.¹³ The

⁹A. J. Hopkins, "Good-bye to Golbanti," Kingdom Overseas, (June 1936), 158.

¹⁰United Methodist Free Church, Minute Book I, 393. Charles New had explored the area around Kilimanjaro and had recommended Chagga as a possible mission field.

¹¹Ibid., p. 34.

¹²J. Temu, British Protestant Missions (Lodhona: Longmans, 1972, p. 15.

¹³Hopkins, p. 35. Bishop Royston of CMS expressed surprise that the Methodists had a station in between two CMS stations and barely twenty

numbers of adherents kept on dwindling; and after the abolition of slavery in East Africa, it became an insignificant station with only a handful of converts who established themselves on the mission land. The Arab-Swahili slave owners were a constant threat to the existence of the mission station. In 1888 they daringly closed communication between Jomvu, Ribe and Mombasa, thus making the missionaries' work ineffective.¹⁴

Organized in their closely knit Kayas, sacred stockaded groves used as places of refuge, the Wanyika did not seem to feel any need for new religious beliefs; they already believed in the Supreme Being whom they called "Mulungu".¹⁵ This was one reason why the task of attracting converts to Christianity was difficult. Because the Wanyika were divided into nine Kayas with no central authority, the missionaries were frustrated in that they did not know whom to approach. They needed an authoritative central figure of the calibre of Mandara, the Chief of the Chagga.¹⁶ They did not understand the democratic form of government that the Wanyika practiced. Often a council of elders in each Kaya decided matters on behalf of the whole community. If there was any ada (toll) or hongo (bribery) to be paid, it was to the whole group of people.¹⁷ Since the missionaries did not understand the social structure, they were inclined

miles apart. Church Missionary Intelligencer, IX (1873), 29.

¹⁴Wakefield, p. 153.

¹⁵Hopkins, p. II.

¹⁶Temu, p. 32.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 38.

to approach people individually rather than as a whole group.

The Nyika Mission did not yield spectacular results. Indeed its fruits were meager compared to the amount of work that was put in, and the difficult and strenuous conditions. After ten years of residence, Wakefield in 1872 lamented lack of success of Nyika Mission. He associated this lack of success with scanty Nyika population, and his relentless determination was to go to a denser population.¹⁸

Mission stations found themselves, moreover, burdened with social misfits, the ostracized people, and the run-away slaves. In some respects the missionaries found it easier to work among ex-slaves because it was easier for missionaries to exercise some authority over them than among the free Wamijikenda. Finding Jomvu inhabited with freed slaves, John Houghton, the first European missionary on the Tana, declared in exasperation:

Jomvu itself has become a town of some 200 people, many of them runaway slaves, and of the lowest type of humanity; gathered together for the purpose of obtaining work and shelter.¹⁹

The CMS had been pioneers in the development of freed-slave colonies, notably at Freretown. These colonies were made up of runaway slaves, slaves bought directly from the dealers and some who were rescued at sea by British ships.²⁰

¹⁸Kirsop, p. 40.

¹⁹R. Brewin, The Martyrs of Golbanti (London: Crombie, 1901), p. 41.

²⁰Ronald Oliver, The Missionary Factor in East Africa (London: Longmans, 1952), p. 51. Freed slave settlements were called "colonies". They developed into fully-fledged economic and political units wholly directed by missionaries.

In the same way the Methodists established in their stations colonies of former slaves at Ribe, Jomvu and, to a lesser degree, at Mazera.²¹ To administer these slave settlements required more than average administrative ability. Thomas Carthew, who administered the Jomvu settlement, was such a strict administrator that he was nicknamed "Simba" (Lion) by the inmates.²² A stout and well-built man, he was ready to use bodily force if necessary to confront his adversary. The culprit might be either a resident of the settlement or a slave owner who dared to re-claim his runaway slave.

The unfortunate former slaves had not chosen to live in these Christian settlements but were forced by circumstances beyond their control. Perhaps they had been rescued at sea by British ships and had been handed over to the missionaries. They were victims of fate since they were uprooted from their home surroundings; hence they resented the demands and laws that were put to them. The missionaries felt that "stern and unrelaxing discipline was demanded." This was thought to be the best way of making disciples out of them.²³ Carthew was known to apply corporal punishment of a severe type. He ruled by decree, and his decree was unquestioned. As Hopkins mildly puts it:

Incipient anarchy demands the absolute dictator. And Carthew was the man for that role! His judgement was never allowed to be questioned with impunity Justice was apt to be short in its

²¹J. D. Phillipson and R. H. B. Shapland, Tana Tales (London: Hooks, n.d.), p. 3.

²²Hopkins, p. 45.

²³Ibid., p. 48.

course and prompt in its application. Offenders not infrequently left the presence bearing visible evidences of a painful interview.²⁴

Often those "visible evidences" were the marks of severe scourging and beating. Obviously the missionaries had a difficult job making Christians out of half-willing people. Prayers and prompt attendance at services were compulsory. One would have been in great trouble for missing a roll-call at a prayer meeting. Often after a day's hard work, it was natural for some to doze. Carthew never allowed this type of impiety.

If some unfortunate proved inattentive while Carthew was proclaiming the Gospel in Church, the preacher had an unfailing method of recalling wandering wits. A book was invariably at hand, and Carthew was never known to miss.²⁵

The stations continued to face numerous problems so long as slavery was practiced along the coast within the Sultan's domain. Missionaries found it hard to explain to a freed slave that he or she was really free when any attempt to run away from the station would have resulted in re-enslavement.²⁶ The more people came into the settlement, the stricter the laws became. In 1881 Holmwood, who was the British Vice-Consul in Zanzibar, made a general protest over the treatment of ex-slaves. He wrote to one of the CMS missionaries at Freretown saying:

I was not prepared to find, in addition to long terms of imprisonment, you were also in the habit of inflicting severe floggings. . . without judicial investigation and in the majority of cases, without recording or even hearing evidence.²⁷

²⁴Ibid., p. 49.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Oliver, p. 53.

²⁷Ibid., p. 53-54, footnote 4.

The Arab and the Swahili slavers were also incensed with the missionaries' attitude for other reasons. They concluded (rightly) that since the missionaries would not give up the run-away slaves, even after proof of ownership was produced, their only alternative was to use force to re-capture their slaves.²⁸ The defense problem of the settlements was becoming acute. Residents had to be armed to await any possible attack by the slave owners.²⁹ The British Consul at Zanzibar, Sir John Kirk, associated this state of affairs with the indiscreet manner in which the missionaries received the runaway slaves. In his letter to Granville, Kirk says:

The present difficulty at Mombasa arose out of the reception given at the Mission Stations (both CMS and Methodist) to fugitive slaves, and while on the one hand the missionaries feared combined attack on the part of the townspeople, the owners of the slaves on their part felt they were in personal danger of a general slave-rising instigated by . . . the missionaries.³⁰

The British East Africa Company³¹ advocated leniency in dealing with Arabs. They strongly advised the missionaries to avoid making their stations a haven for runaway slaves. The British Consul, Sir John Kirk, was compelled to issue a warning concerning the missionaries' attitude to the runaways. He felt constrained to "condemn the course the missionaries

²⁸Ibid., p. 55.

²⁹Ibid., p. 56.

³⁰Ibid., p. 55, footnote 1.

³¹The B.E.A.C. hoisted their flag in 1888 as they inaugurated their presence in British East Africa. The Company was charged with the responsibilities of administering the territory on behalf of the British government, as well as engaging in profitable commerce. CMS Minute Book G3/A5/P3 (para. 357).

were taking which could lead to bloodshed, murder, and to the ruin of missions."³² He reminded the missions that they were "integral parts of the Sultan's dominion, in which the Sultan's laws prevail over all his people".³³

The missionaries were weary of the British government's reluctance to abolish the slave trade in the Sultan's dominion. They earnestly desired direct administration by the government. They saw the abolition of slavery with all its human degradation to be a primary aspect of their mission. Charles New on December 28, 1874 summed up the mind of his fellow missionaries during this time.

Whenever I go, I see and hear the same horror that prevailed years ago; chained gangs, manacled and fettered individuals; the clank, clank, clank of irons, the grip of stocks, the thud of the stick, the screams of the afflicted fall upon the ear everyday. Unmentioned cruelties are perpetrated, and the victims suffer, bleed and die; yet England is congratulating herself upon her wonderful philanthropy and persuading herself that slavery is no more.³⁴

Both sides, missionaries and the Arabs, were fearful that matters might come to a showdown with the dreaded consequence of major fighting.³⁵ A settlement was negotiated in 1888 for a cash payment as a compensation to the Arabs for the loss of slaves. Reluctantly the Arabs agreed to receive £3,500 for a total of 1,400 slaves.³⁶ The I.B.E.A.C. raised £ 1,300 towards this, while CMS donated £ 1,200. The Methodists paid £ 200, and the balance was paid by the British Treasury.

³²East Africa Mission No. 2, 1881, G3/A5/P1 p. 2, CMS Archives, London.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Horace Weller, "Dr. Livingstone and the East Africa Slave Trade", Church Missionary Intelligencer, XI (1875), 110.

³⁵Temu, p. 28.

³⁶Ibid., p. 29.

The missionaries must have sighed with relief when in 1890 slave trading even within the ten-mile coastal strip was abolished by the British.³⁷ Following this, the East African Protectorate comprised of Kenya and Uganda was launched under the care of the Consul General who still resided at Zanzibar.³⁸ From this time the missions felt much more secure under the protection of the British government. They also felt free to engage in acts directed to the total abolition of slavery.³⁹

Thomas Carthew was one of those missionaries who felt a sense of betrayal by the attitude subsequently adopted by the Imperial British East Africa Company (I.B.E.A.C.). The I.B.E.A.C. did not feel constrained to act according to the law for fear of reprisals by the Arabs. The status of the slaves remained as before. This meant that if a slave owner claimed fugitive slaves on any mission station, the missionaries had a duty to surrender them to slavery.⁴⁰ There was an instance where armed Arabs invaded Mazeras station at dawn to claim their former slaves. They had a letter from the sub-administrator of the I.B.E.A.C. When they were refused entry into the station, the sub-administrator sent his own soldiers to arrest the Catechist at Mazeras, Mr. Mazera, and took away the ex-slaves by force. Mazera was later found guilty of resisting

³⁷ CMS Proceedings 1906/1907, p. 243, CMS Archives, London.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Even when the Sultan abolished the slave trade in his dominions, domestic slavery was left untouched. It remained a persistent source of trouble and irritation.

⁴⁰ Joseph Kirsop, Life of Thomas Carthew, Missionary to East Africa (London: Crombie, 1897), p. 23.

the soldiers in exercise of their rightful duty. He paid a fine of five rupees.⁴¹

To Carthew, that was a disgusting affair, and he protested to the missionary committee in England concerning the provocation by the British judicial officer. The committee passed a resolution to the effect that:

After having heard the communication from the Rev. T. H. Carthew and from the I.B.E.A.C., this committee expresses its strong disapproval of the action of the Chartered Company's officials in relation to the escaped-slave case recently dealt with at Mombasa when Mazera, our native teacher, was fined, and several natives belonging to the mission imprisoned.⁴²

The committee went on to condemn such an action as "discourteous" and "inhuman". It implored the I.B.E.A.C. not to repeat it without the full consent of the party involved. The company sympathized with the missionary committee's suggestions but could not see how they could operate in any other manner so long as slavery was a recognized institution. Nothing short of total abolition was good enough.⁴³

In this context we see the second of two traits of Carthew which are difficult to reconcile in the same person. Even though some sources⁴⁴ depict Carthew as cruel, his biographer, Mr. Joseph Kirsop, shows that Carthew also had a much more benevolent side to his nature. He hated slavery and could not bear to see it practiced in his domain. He ransomed slaves out of his own pocket and more often than not, he sent the

⁴¹Ibid., p. 26. ⁴²Ibid., p. 27. ⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Hopkins, p. 49; Cf. Kirsop, *ibid.*, p. 25.

Arab slave hunters scurrying away. He lived up to his nickname, "Simba", in terrorizing those who wanted to enslave his converts. He aided the fugitives and came into open conflict with the compromising I.B.E.A.C.'s rule.⁴⁵

So long as slavery was a recognized institution, there was nothing much that the missionaries could do to avoid collision with the slave-owners.⁴⁶ The only change that would have made a difference was the change of status which ultimately made slaves into free people, capable of determining their own destiny. The total abolition of slavery, however, was not achieved until 1907. The Foreign Office then agreed to compensate the slave owners for the loss they incurred.⁴⁷

It had been generally accepted that the conclusion of the Slave Treaty with Sultan Seyyid Bargash of Zanzibar in 1873 would not close the chapter of slavery. This was a beginning of a difficult and soul-searching epoch. For a period of more than fifteen years after formal abolition, slavery gathered more momentum under the disguise of trade caravans.⁴⁸ Intelligent observers knew from the start that it was not easy thing to fight so entrenched an institution as slavery. The Christian missions knew that they were engaged in a long and weary battle.

⁴⁵The Missionary Echo (1896), 9.

⁴⁶Wakefield, p. 236. ⁴⁷Temu, p. 60.

⁴⁸Alison Smith, "The Southern Section of the Interior 1840-84", in The History of East Africa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), I, 293-296.

Charles New, for instance, knew that the liberation of slaves on the coast would bring social and economic consequences.⁴⁹ He envisaged that in order to conquer slavery once and for all on the East Coast, a colony similar to the one that was established in Sierra Leone was essential.⁵⁰

In his own words Charles New says:

We are bound to take care of, and properly educate, those whom we voluntarily liberate, and make our proteges; but hitherto this is a work which has been sadly neglected.⁵¹

The transportation of liberated slaves outside the country was discouraged. In New's experience, the uprooted slaves felt "their exile more than they did their original slavery."⁵² According to New, Africans needed to be trained and educated in Africa following the motto, "Africa for the Africans."⁵³ New was criticizing CMS's earlier method of training African ex-slaves in India to become missionary helpers in East Africa.

Around the close of the century the missions wanted the role of industrial training for the liberated slaves to fall into their lap. This became an enviable possibility on the part of the Christian missions who were optimistic that, once they undertook this task, their numbers would automatically swell and the harvest would be abundant for a long while. They entered into this task with renewed expectations and vigour. They were followers of the Livingstonian legacy of trying to replace the slave

⁴⁹ Charles New, Life, Wanderings and Labours in Eastern Africa (London: Cass, 1971), p. 27.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 506.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., p. 507.

⁵³ Ibid.

trade with education and industrial training.⁵⁴ Following these steps, Frere, the British Consul, advocated the need to promulgate modern skills as a second step beyond abolition of slavery.⁵⁵

We should point out at this juncture that the Arabs were not the only ones guilty of benefiting from the slave trade in human beings. Before European nations came into the trade, the type of slavery that existed on the East Coast was domestic slavery, not commercial slavery, where slaves were treated as members of a family and could become free again. What Arabs could be accused of is not encouraging the slavery, but continuing to play the game when everyone else had called it off. Arabs were not the original slave traders of the East African Coast as Horace Philp would have us believe.⁵⁶ Their cardinal sin in the eyes of the missionaries was engaging in slavery while at the same time continuing to be Muslims even when presented with the opportunity of hearing the gospel.⁵⁷ Missionaries felt that since Islam had prohibited slavery against Muslims, the Arabs were not only resisting the gospel but were slaving as well.

The missionaries had already formed their opinion about Arabs even before they arrived. Charles New, for instance, portrayed his

⁵⁴W. B. Anderson, The Church in East Africa 1840 - 1974 (Dodoma: Tanganyika Press, 1977), p. 9.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 10.

⁵⁶H.R.A. Philp, A New Day in Kenya (London: World Dominion Press, 1936), p. 126. Africans had domestic slaves long before the advent of Arabs or Europeans.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 127.

conspicuous prejudice against the Arabs when he said that the Arabs ". . . taken as a whole are a detestable race that scarcely possesses a redeeming quality."⁵⁸ He found it almost impossible to convert an Arab to Christianity, hence his pre-conceived prejudice was reinforced by his experience.

New did not possess a compromising spirit. He loathed the brutalities of the Muslim slave-owning society along the Coast.

In this he shared the anti-Islamic sentiments that possessed most of his fellow missionaries working on the East African Coast.⁵⁹ No wonder, then, the attitude of the Arabs towards the missionaries was one of intense hostility. A cleavage between the two societies was created. There were no conciliatory moves taken by either side, and the struggle became that of Christianity versus Islam.⁶⁰

Missionaries were united in their wish that the Imperial British East Africa Company should seize effective authority along the East African Coast. Only by making its influence felt would the I.B.E.A.C. be in a position to help the cause begun by Christian missions and abolish slavery.⁶¹

But not all the missionaries adopted such a militant attitude on the freedom of slaves, even though they all favoured the abolitionist cause. It was still the official stand of missionary societies to refrain

⁵⁸Ibid.,

⁵⁹New, p. 26.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Price to I.B.E.A.C., September 6, 1888, CMS Archives, London, G3/A5/P3.

from taking any step that would antagonize the Arabs. In July 1890 Anglican Bishop Tucker of Zanzibar, for example, heard a rumour on his visit to Freretown that slaves were being illegally harboured at Rabai. He immediately made enquiries of the Rev. Mr. Jones, who at that time was in charge of the CMS station. Mr. Jones replied that there might have been a few runaway slaves residing at the station. Bishop Tucker rebuked Jones for violating the mission's regulations. He requested that the Askaris (soldiers) at Rabai be publicly reprimanded and dismissed and a baraza (palaver) be arranged with Arabs to inform them that the mission was not aware of this. He concluded by unequivocally instructing Mr. Jones that a similar failure on his part in future would lead to outright suspension and a possible disconnexion.⁶²

Emancipation of slaves continued to be a thorny problem along the East African Coast up to 1907 when the final promulgation against slavery by the British government was declared. The Foreign Office agreed to compensate the Arabs for their loss. To make this ruling effective, courts were established along the Coast to determine how much compensation was due to slave masters.⁶³ The missionaries congratulated themselves on this achievement. This was a legacy that Livingstone had left behind for them to follow. They rejoiced that their efforts had

⁶²Bishop Tucker to Jones, Zanzibar July 19, 1890, CMS Archives, (London), G3/A5/P3.

⁶³Hardinge to Lord Salisbury, February 9, 1899, F02/189 PRO (London).

borne fruit, and with a sigh of relief they embarked on their primary duty of evangelization.

TRAIL BLAZERS

Thomas Wakefield.

Thomas Wakefield who was the pioneer missionary of the United Methodist Free Churches in East Africa for more than twenty-seven years, was the man behind missionary activities of the U.M.F.C. along the East African Coast.⁶⁴ Wakefield was known by the Africans as Bwana "Pole Pole", indicating that he took his time before making any new venture. He was a man who counted the cost.⁶⁵

As has been mentioned earlier, Wakefield arrived on the East Coast of Africa on March 23, 1862.⁶⁶ With Krapf's help Wakefield quickly established himself at Ribe, being assisted by his colleague, James Woolner. When Woolner and Krapf had left, Wakefield found himself all alone. He must have wondered how a lonely European could be expected to carry out the task of establishing Christianity among people who least understood him.⁶⁷

Before too long, Wakefield started doubting the wisdom of choosing Ribe as the center of operation.⁶⁸ Not only was it too near

⁶⁴Hopkins, p. 26.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 29.

⁶⁶Wakefield, p. 32.

⁶⁷Hopkins, p. 30.

⁶⁸Ibid.

the CMS station at Rabai, but the inhabitants (Waribe) were too few in number to warrant another station. According to his rough estimate, there were probably ten thousand people living in the area comprised of Ribe, Kambe, Jibana, and Chonyi. What sustained him, however, was his vision of reaching the legendary Galla tribe. It was worth the trouble if a way could be found to reach the Gallas.

With the arrival of Charles New, Wakefield started a school at Ribe. Another colleague, Edmund Butterworth, arrived in February 1864 but died in April, barely two months after disembarking.⁶⁹ Wakefield never forgot the object of his mission to reach the Gallas and started organizing himself for the possibility of such an expedition.⁷⁰ Dr. Krapf reminded him to keep this vision alive. He encouraged him to establish another station at Kauma, since "at Kauma you would be nearer the Galla country, and you know how much I have a Galla Mission at heart."⁷¹

Charles New shared the enthusiasm of his colleague and assisted in the preparation that had to be done in connection with the anticipated visit. They continued to seek for converts around Ribe while waiting for the opportune time to visit the Gallas.⁷² In March 1865, Wakefield and New embarked on a fact-finding mission around Kambe, Jibana, Chonyi and Kauma. This was in preparation for the Galla visit.⁷³ After

⁶⁹Wakefield, p. 37.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 39.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid., p. 40.

⁷³Ibid., p. 43.

exhaustive preparation and procrastination by the home authorities due to lack of finances, the journey was begun on August 13, 1865. The leader of the party was a Muslim by the name of Mwidani-bin-Mwidadi, who later was converted to Christianity. The party consisted of ten people, most of whom were used as porters.⁷⁴ Up to this time, there is no evidence of African participation in the mission.

Besides taking their provisions, they were obliged to take the currency of the Galla Country. Such currency was made up of beads, brass, iron wire, coloured cloth, grey and indigo-dyed calico, lemali (coarse cloth) and such other things as might please the chiefs and influential people.⁷⁵ The Gallas required that foreigners pay tax or toll before entering their territory. They understood that their country was highly valued by foreigners, hence they demanded high fees, especially from Europeans who insisted on penetrating into their territory. They assumed that the Europeans had inexhaustible resources. They could, therefore, demand more and more things to be given as "ada".⁷⁶

The toll or "ada" varied from place to place, and so the missionaries were reduced to a bargaining status. Often they were not able to determine which was the legitimate authority to whom the tax was to be paid. Wakefield for example, complained that the elders at Goddoma impoverished them by taking a large part of their meager resources, demanding more and more.⁷⁷ What Wakefield wrongly described as blackmail and bribery (hongo), the elders understood to be ada (toll) which

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 47.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 53.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 58.

was legitimate and lawful.⁷⁸ During his first visit to Galla country, Wakefield had to turn back at reaching Kauma because the elders demanded \$100 as a fee for permission to cross their frontier. Wakefield thought this to be unreasonable and exorbitant.⁷⁹ Apart from the normal toll, the elders were concerned about the security of their country. They wanted to be absolutely certain that their visitors intended no evil machination towards their country.⁸⁰

After several attempts Wakefield was able to enter the Galla country in 1867.⁸¹ The Galla mission was not, however, begun until 1884, when the West African Minister, the Rev. W. H. During, and his wife opened Christian missions at such places as Jomvu, Chonyi and Mazeras.⁸²

Although Wakefield was a man of strong character and had good qualities that made him a hero, he had certain weaknesses. He certainly looked down on the Africans as inferior to the Europeans. Mrs. Wakefield's description of the Africans is also patronizing to say the least. Giving a description of their African servant, she says:

At a glance he looks much like a gorilla; has a sloping forehead, great broad nose, and uncommonly thick lips, which stretch right across his face, surely he would frighten the Sunday School children at home.⁸³

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 51.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 53.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 62.

⁸¹Hopkins, p. 42.

⁸²Ibid., p. 36.

⁸³R. Brewin, (ed.) Memoirs of Mrs. Rebecca Wakefield (London: Paternoster, 1888), p. 140. (Brewin is quoting from a journal written by Mrs. Wakefield)

Mr. Wakefield described the Wanyika as "a small, inferior stagnant race."⁸⁴ Missionaries report the excessive laziness of the African people, comparing them to the hard-working English people.⁸⁵

One incident shows the double standards which Wakefield employed against Africans. A suspected thief was put under unlawful custody for almost a week, under the suspicion that he stole some sheep. He would have stayed longer if his attempt at escape had not succeeded. He was, however, a victim of circumstances. Wakefield knew that the imprisonment would not have been allowed under the English law where a suspect was innocent until proven guilty. This illustrates how missionaries took magisterial powers upon themselves and punished the suspected law-breakers.⁸⁶ As Mrs. Wakefield reports, elders came to plead for the man whom they believed to be innocent.

Wakefield was not alone in depicting Africans as backward and lazy.⁸⁷ It had become habitual for Europeans to associate African backwardness with laziness.

Even though Mrs. Wakefield castigated the African for being lazy, she was often carried by Africans on a chair on arduous journeys. It was a surprise to visitors to find hard-working Africans. In his own words one visitor says:

⁸⁴Wakefield, p. 169.

⁸⁵Brewin, Memoirs, p. 173, Mrs. Wakefield describes the Gallas as being "lazy like nearly all Africans." Ibid., p. 241.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 236.

⁸⁷Wakefield, p. 41.

I have heard it said that the negro is very lazy. That may be so, but on this voyage our boatmen worked as hard and perseveringly as I have ever seen Englishmen work under any circumstances.⁸⁸

In speaking about utter depravity of the African, the pioneers wanted to show how much effort they had to exert to bring the African to a point of appreciating European civilization. One should not be surprised, therefore, when one sees such terminology as "savages", "maniacs", and the like.⁸⁹ The missionaries' writings were intended for home audiences, to demonstrate to them how difficult the task that they were sent to accomplish could be.

Thomas Wakefield is remembered as a man who pioneered the Methodist Mission in East Africa. Even though his mission did not really succeed, he was, nevertheless, instrumental in consolidating the work in "Unyika". His numerous articles to the Royal Geographical Society contributed to the European exploration and occupation of East and Central Africa. He took time from his primary occupation to prepare maps and notes of routes from the East Coast to the interior which attracted considerable attention of traders and colonizers alike.⁹⁰ His exemplary achievement was emulated by Charles New, his colleague and companion.

Charles New.

At the age of twenty-three years, Charles New sailed to the

⁸⁸J. H. Duerden, "From England to Golbanti," U.M.F.C. Magazine (February 1902), 135.

⁸⁹Brewin, *Memoirs*, p. 189.

⁹⁰Wakefield, p. 105.

East African Coast by way of Bombay in December 1862.⁹¹ He arrived in Mombasa in April 1863. He was sent by the U.M.F.C. to keep Wakefield company after his colleagues had all left to return home. Mr. New had very humble beginnings. Born of a working-class family in Fulham, England, he had only elementary education before taking a job as a cobbler. He acquired most of his learning as an adult.

New was a man of great vision and wisdom. He soon discovered that the Galla Mission postulated by Wakefield might not succeed. He was clearly skeptical about the viability of such an enterprise and was quick to point it out to the mission Committee in London.⁹² If the Galla Mission was to be abandoned, then Ribe would not serve its purpose as originally intended. For a short time they contemplated giving over the station at Ribe to the Church Missionary Society, but they afterwards changed their minds.⁹³ There seemed to be an interest generated among the people around Ribe; consequently an influx of Galla refugees sought a new home at this place. Once the prospects improved, determination to keep Ribe was fostered.

Charles New was not content to see things as they were. He was determined to see a more forward-looking policy towards the East African Mission.⁹⁴ He wanted to follow a vigorous strategy of looking for better working areas in the interior.⁹⁵ He would have liked to attempt to set

⁹¹New, p. 12.

⁹²Ibid., (New Introduction) p. 8.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Hopkins, p. 17.

⁹⁵Ibid.

mission stations in Kikuyuland, Kamba, Usambara and Moshi. In 1871 he set out on the Kilimanjaro expedition which had become his pre-occupation ever since he arrived in Mombasa.⁹⁶ He hoped to visit Wachagga on the way. He met Mandara and became friends with the chief, helping to open this area for mission work in the future. Encouraged by the chief's words, "I will give you a plot of land upon which to build a house, and I will build one near you,"⁹⁷ New talked of future prospects of opening a thriving mission station there.⁹⁸

On return to Ribe, he found an open invitation to return to England for furlough.⁹⁹ When he was preparing himself to return home, New learned that he had been commissioned to join an expedition that was to conduct a search and relief for Dr. Livingstone. At the request of the Royal Geographical Society, a leave of absence had been granted to New in order that he might feel at liberty to join the expedition.¹⁰⁰ The expedition was called off, however, after the return of Stanley with the news as to the whereabouts of Livingstone. New had been persuaded by Sir John Kirk, the acting British Consul in Zanzibar, to accept the invitation because of his knowledge of the people of the interior.

After furlough, during which he was made an Honorary Corresponding Member of the Royal Geographical Society, New left England in May 1874 and set sail again for East Africa.¹⁰¹ He was anxious to return to

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 18.

⁹⁷New, p. 433.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 510.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 511.

¹⁰¹Livingstone was the only other man honoured in this way up to this date.

Kilimanjaro; within a fortnight after his arrival, he set off for Usambara. Chief Kimweri received him well. Charles New liked the country as a future base of operations. He had, nevertheless become obsessed with the visit to Chagga country. Even though he was sick, he forced himself to undertake the strenuous journey. Mandara mistreated him, and he barely escaped with his life. He was too weak to get to Ribe and died on the way on 13th February, 1875.

There has been some tendency to rank New with the European explorers of the calibre of Speke, Grant and Stanley. He contributed much to the geographical knowledge of the interior. He was, for example, able to ascertain that the Sabaki and Tana Rivers were, in fact, different rivers flowing in different directions and rising in different mountain ranges.¹⁰² He confirmed that Mt. Kenya was the source of the Tana River. During his expedition to Kilimanjaro, he submitted to the Royal Geographical Society a comprehensive list of vegetation he found.¹⁰³

His work among the Wanyika, however, was not spectacular by any standards.¹⁰⁴ He was greatly disappointed by the progress that was being made. On the other hand he was optimistic about some future prospects of opening up new areas.¹⁰⁵ He looked forward to the time when U.M.F.C. would acquire a more promising field of operation, hence his visit to the Chagga country.

¹⁰²New, Introduction, p. 21.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁰⁵Temu, p. 33.

It has often been asked whether there ever was any conflict of aim between New as a missionary and New as an explorer? Did he take much more time on exploration rather than on actual evangelism? A Church Missionary Society missionary who resided at Mombasa and knew New well wrote that:

Mr. New had many qualities for an evangelist, but he seemed entirely led astray to seek fame as a geographical explorer and an anti-slave advocate. Alas, what a solemn warning to missionaries to be true to their calling!¹⁰⁶

It is true that New might have been led astray by attempting to publicize explorations into the interior of East Africa, but he did this for the purpose of extending Christian missions. He managed to arouse some enthusiasm and interest in East Africa. He might have spent more time on the exploration rather than direct evangelism, but to him, evangelism took the primary place. Exploration took a secondary role, and was useful only when it helped to enhance "salvation of souls".¹⁰⁷

If we take a look at missionaries of Mr. New's generation, we shall, perhaps, be a bit disturbed to discover that their period coincided with the European domination of Africa. It is argued today that missionaries were no different from colonists. Through the means of mass media and deputations, missionaries inculcated into the minds of the European populace that their Christian influence would be a great blessing

¹⁰⁶Sparshott to Church Missionary Society, 2nd March, 1875, Church Missionary Society Archives, London.

¹⁰⁷S. S. Barton, The Life of Charles New (London: Crombie, 1889), p. 152.

to the Africans.¹⁰⁸ It became an accepted notion that ". . . the genial tide of western progress was flowing in, even among 'the neglected children of Ham'."¹⁰⁹

In the eyes of the African,¹¹⁰ there was no distinct difference between a missionary, a consul, an explorer or trader. They seemed to share the same outlook, and were products of the same cultural milieu. They demonstrated the same sense of racial superiority to the African. They directed, controlled and generally treated Africans in the same manner, portraying the same prejudices. As Elliott Kendall has rightly summed it up:

It must be admitted that Charles New and his colleagues living in East African Society in the third quarter of the Nineteenth Century welcomed the possibility of European powers taking responsibility for colonial rule in different parts of Eastern Africa. That was undoubtedly a political decision which they made as Christians in those circumstances. It may now be regarded dubious, but then it was a responsible Christian judgment which, looking back, needs to be evaluated objectively rather than dismissed harshly.¹¹¹

New and others pressed for the establishment of a British colony to offer protection to the innocent Africans who were being enslaved.¹¹² Missionaries were concerned about their own security, hence their interest in European domination. It should be realized that Charles New believed that Africa could be developed only by "civilized countries like Britain,

¹⁰⁸Oliver, p. 93.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰There is a popular African saying that "There is no difference between a missionary and a colonist".

¹¹¹Kendall, p. 113.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 114.

who were championing the abolitionist cause",¹¹³ The missionaries, of course, were at the forefront of the campaign to mould public opinion with regard to the doctrine of legitimate trade. Following the Livingstonian legacy which was calculated to introduce education, commerce and industry as a means of counteracting slavery, missions drew the inevitable conclusion that these ideal values could not be realized without first the introduction of a centralized administration.

As British subjects, missionaries pursued a vigorous campaign to put Kenya under British protection. This campaign culminated in the declaration of the British Protectorate in 1894.¹¹⁴ Missionaries were no longer an easy prey to the machinations of African chiefs with their endless demands. Missionaries were now in an advantageous position to refuse to meet the chiefs' demands. They now had the upper hand over the chiefs and were no longer under their patronage. Under the protection of the British government, they were able to go anywhere unmolested. They began to plan to go into the interior, and through the construction of the Kenya - Uganda railway, this move was accelerated.¹¹⁵ The Methodists had anticipated moving into Embu district in 1907, but it was not until 1913 that the Meru mission was started.

Even though these early missionaries were conditioned by their cultural ties and western Christian upbringing, they were quite convinced that they were bringing the truth of the gospel to the African. If accepted, those truths would transform Africa by ushering in "liberty

¹¹³Oliver, p. 89.

¹¹⁴Temu, p. 51.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

and justice for people of all races."¹¹⁶ They believed that they were called to preach the "good news" of Jesus Christ to all beings, even at their own peril. They conceived their mission to be sacrificial and acted in that spirit.

AFRICAN PIONEERS

Information concerning the African Christians is very scanty. Even though many of them performed spectacularly well in most difficult conditions, very little is said about them, either in newsletters or Church magazines. Sporadically a few of them were mentioned in passing, but no attempt was made to trace their backgrounds. In this account, the endeavour has been made to draw together information about a few pioneers among them. These were people who were instrumental in the establishing the Methodist Church along the Coast and the Tana River.

W. H. During, a west African minister, was appointed to East Africa in 1879 to help in the mission under the auspices of the United Methodist Free Churches.¹¹⁷ Mr. During hailed from Waterloo Church in Free Town, Sierra Leone, and was ordained in 1875. He first stayed at Ribe for some time, learning the local languages, Kiswahili and Kigalla, and was later transferred to Jomvu. On Christmas day 1883, he left Jomvu, together with several Galla Christians, bound for the Galla country for the purpose of opening up the Galla mission. On this

¹¹⁶Kendall, p. 118.

¹¹⁷Brewin, Martyrs of Golbanti, pp. 46-47.

occasion he had left his wife at Ribe. With the help of local evangelists, Aba Shora and Matthew Shakala, he was able to open up a base at Lamu and a center at Kau.¹¹⁸ He went to Golbanti, purchased a plot of land close to the Tana River, and proceeded in the task of building a mission house and a chapel. He built an iron mission house which was covered with a thatch of palm leaves with extended eaves which sheltered the sides from the rain.¹¹⁹

The purpose of bringing Mr. During from Sierra Leone was to discover whether Africans would be better suited to work in these conditions. According to Wakefield, the mission committee had made up its mind "to supply the East Africa mission from other stations with brethren who by constitution and colour would be suited to the climate."¹²⁰ The coastal climate which was often hot and humid was deemed more easily tolerated by the West African missionaries. Since the East African mission cost more dearly in terms of lives lost, the idea of securing Africans for the African mission was very attractive indeed. Many of the European missionaries had quickly died from fever or suffered debilitating chronic illness.

After making the initial effort in forming the nucleus of the new mission, Mr. During was ready to return to Ribe where his family resided.¹²¹ Wakefield visited the Galla country, accompanied by Mr. Houghton who was to stay at Golbanti after During's departure. In 1885,

¹¹⁸Hopkins, p. 43.

¹¹⁹Brewin, Martyrs of Golbanti, p. 48.

¹²⁰Wakefield, p. 158.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 196.

Wakefield and Houghton reached Lamu on their way to Golbanti where they were met by During.¹²² Wakefield and Houghton returned to Ribe, leaving During behind to continue his work in the Galla Country until John Houghton and his wife were able to settle.¹²³

At one time there were only two resident ordained missionaries in the East African mission, Wakefield and During. When Mr. Wakefield returned home in June 1887 and until the arrival of Mr. Carthew in October the same year, Mr. During was in charge of the whole East African mission. He divided his attention between the missions of Galla and Nyika.¹²⁴ Mr. During took charge of the Galla mission when Carthew settled at Jomvu, but in 1889 he resigned in order to return home to West Africa.¹²⁵

Wakefield was so very much impressed by During's success that he comments: "During is a capable and useful missionary, and helpful all round."¹²⁶

As an African, During surely must have understood the customs of the people better than the Europeans did. Even though he came from West Africa, he had cultural ties with the people among whom he worked. It is a pity that the policy of appointing African missionaries was not

¹²²Ibid., p. 195.

¹²³Stedford, "Our Work in East Africa," Missionary Echo of the United Methodist Church (1911), 176.

¹²⁴W. A. Howe, "Our East African Mission," Missionary Echo of the United Methodist Church (February 1896), 70.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶Wakefield, p. 184.

repeated. I have the feeling that such a policy would have yielded better results especially with regard to the Tana River. Mr. Houghton, who succeeded Mr. During at Golbanti, appreciated the latter's magnificent work and comments that:

Mr. During, an African from West Coast, is a splendid fellow, and several others who have had an English training show that the difference is not in the men but in their unfortunate position.¹²⁷

Matthew Shakala was one of the leading local catechists, who aspired to become a great leader in his Church. He was one of the first converts to be baptised by Wakefield in 1870.¹²⁸ He had come to Ribe as a refugee; attracted to the life at the mission station, he decided to stay on. Not only was he converted to the Christian faith, but he went to school and thereafterwards became a teacher of great repute.¹²⁹ When During opened up the Golbanti station in Galla country, Shakala was one of those who helped him to negotiate the purchase of a plot of land from the elders. Shakala was engaged as a catechist and a teacher, combining the two roles remarkably well. He was present during the assassination of the Houghtons by the Maasai and lived to tell this sad tale.¹³⁰

When there was no missionary at Golbanti, Shakala took control of the situation. For nearly fifty years he was an all-round man, going about his duties cheerfully. He often went out to preach to the villages

¹²⁷Brewin, Martyrs of Golbanti, p. 42.

¹²⁸Phillipson and Shapland, p. 71.

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 72.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 79.

around Golbanti and was generally considered an apostle of Christ among the Galla. The reader will come across his name later on when the mission to the Galla people is considered.

Together with Lazarus Galgalla and Edward Barissa, who had been trained and baptized at Ribe, Shakala made a great contribution to the initial success of the mission. He met his tragic death by drowning in 1911.

John Mgomba was another leading personality. He was one of the earliest converts, having been baptized in 1870. When the Duruma people requested to have a mission established in their location, Mgomba was seen fit to become a missionary amongst his people.¹³¹ The mission station was built at Ganjoni (Mazeras), in 1873.¹³² He eventually became the first minister to the Duruma people.¹³³

After several years, the station was razed to the ground by fire; arson was suspected. Mgomba was removed to Samburu, a station thirty miles from Mazeras. The deputation that visited East Africa from England in 1902 was very impressed by Mgomba's work and reported:

John Mgomba is worth all we have spent in East Africa. He is a saintly type of man, and his devotion, like that of Thomas Mazera at Mazeras and Matthew Shakala at Tana, is above praise.¹³⁴

Even though he had lapsed for a few years around 1900, Mgomba became an ardent supporter of the Methodist mission activities. He spent most of his life working for the mission, first as a teacher and later as

¹³¹Wakefield, p. 198.

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴United Methodist Free Churches Magazine (September 1902), 14.

a minister. He died on September 23, 1917, being still under the employ of the United Methodist Mission.¹³⁵ The Rev. Ratcliffe has this to say concerning his colleague:

Of the natives who were received into our ministry in East Africa, the Rev. J. Mgomba was far and away the finest mind, the purest life and richest soul. A man of deep spiritual sensitiveness, of absolutely reliable character, and having no trace of heathen custom about him, I look upon the career and work of my old and lamented friend as the finest trophy of our pioneers, whom it will be difficult to replace.¹³⁶

Thomas Mazera was perhaps the most outstanding local minister associated with the Duruma mission. In Wakefield's own words, Mazera's stupendous insight and drive made him an important agent of an important center for the mission outreach.¹³⁷

The station originally called Ganjoni was given its present name in gratitude to its founder and teacher. An attempt to call it "Mawsonville" failed.

After the station had burned down in 1883, it was left to lie desolate until Thomas Mazera was sent to build it with a view to reviving its original fervour.¹³⁸ In February 1885, Mazera commenced his task of building mission houses that had been laid desolate, as well as gathering potential converts in the station.

¹³⁵J. B. Griffiths, "Annual Report (1917)" United Methodist Free Churches Magazine, 54.

¹³⁶B. J. Ratcliffe, "John Mgomba: In Memoriam", The Missionary Echo of the United Methodist Church, (June 1877), 114. Rev. Ratcliffe was Mgomba's colleague from 1899 to 1906. Probably Mgomba entered the Methodist ministry in 1899.

¹³⁷Wakefield, p. 198; cf. pp. 223-224.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*

Before Mazera was converted to Christianity, he had been a medicineman and had three wives. According to the demands of European missionaries, he discarded two of his wives and remained with one.¹³⁹ Whether he did this through conviction or compulsion is hard to tell. One thing is clear; he was determined to become a pastor among his people and was willing to remove any impediment that stood on his way to realizing this goal. Mazera died in 1915, an old man of about eighty years, having become a "legendary" figure around the village that bore his name.¹⁴⁰ He was responsible for putting up several mission buildings.

Perhaps it could be gross oversight if the name of Steven Kireri were not mentioned in this section. Kireri was one of the earliest converts of the mission.¹⁴¹ He became a missionary to the Chonyi when that station was established in 1873. He did a commendable job of making a number of converts who lived around the station. He later got sick, and his protracted malady proved terminal; on January 11, 1885, he passed away.¹⁴² Together with other pioneers, it is fitting that he be remembered as one of those who faithfully planted the Methodist Church on the Coast.

¹³⁹Griffiths (1915).

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Wakefield, p. 225.

¹⁴²Ibid.

Chapter IV

MISSION TO THE GALLA PEOPLE AND WAPOKOMO

TANA RIVER EXPEDITION

It has been pointed out in the previous chapter that the mission among the Wanyika was established as a means of reaching the Galla land. As early as 1865, Wakefield and New had started making exploratory journeys in and around Kauma.¹ This had been the intended destination for the two Swiss missionaries who had to return home prematurely.² The intention of such explorations was to make contacts with the leaders of different groups and seek from them permission to operate within their territory. They went on foot with a team of carriers loaded with such things as bedding, clothes, food, medicine box, utensils, and other baggage.³

It was during such visits and encounters that pioneer missionaries had the opportunity of meeting the people and attempting to understand their conditions of living. They tried, albeit in a poor way, to communicate their faith.⁴ This was not an easy thing to do. When the missionaries, for example, tried to tell the people of Rabai that they were

¹R. E. Kendall, Charles New and the East Africa Mission (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1979), p. 98.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 100.

sinners, they were incensed with anger exclaiming "Who has been defaming us to you?"⁵ Exploring the surrounding areas strengthened the pioneers' relentless wish to visit the Galla country.⁶

Mr. Wakefield reported that he made the first journey to Galla land on August 13, 1865.⁷ The caravan passed through Kauma. Charles New, a colleague of Wakefield, escorted the caravan but was obliged to return to Ribe in order to conduct the Sunday worship. At Kaya Bomu, Wakefield came into contact with some Galla people who promised to give him every assistance.⁸ He and his caravan were unable to proceed further, since they could not afford the one hundred dollars that the Kauma elders asked as a toll for crossing over their territory.⁹ Wakefield decided to return to Ribe and look for an alternative route.

The second attempt to reach the Galla country was reported as made on September 4, 1865. The Wanyika porters who had accompanied Wakefield on his first journey refused to be a party to the second expedition.¹⁰ Wakefield succeeded in getting fresh people, many of whom were Muslims. The visitors went through Giriama country hoping to find a friendly reception.¹¹ At Kazi-ya-Moto, an emissary was sent to the

⁵W. B. Anderson, The Church in East Africa 1840-1974 (Dodma: Tanganyika Press, 1977), p. 3.

⁶J. Temu, British Protestant Missions (London: Longmans, 1972), p. 33.

⁷E. S. Wakefield, Thomas Wakefield (London: Religious Tract Society, 1906), p. 47.

⁸Ibid., p. 50. ⁹Ibid., p. 55. ¹⁰Ibid., p. 53. ¹¹Ibid., p. 56.

Galla authorities accompanied by a gift of calico and cloth. Since the supply of cloth, much needed to negotiate right of passage, was exhausted, one of Wakefield's companions, Mwidani, was sent to Ribe to collect more calico for the safari.¹²

At Sabaki river the party had to pay "ada" for crossing the country of the Walangulo.¹³ With Goddana, the Galla guide, the party pressed on to their intended destination. When they reached Galla land, the Gallas wanted to know the reasons for their intrusion. Were they traders, peddlers or spies? Without wasting time, Wakefield made them understand the purpose of their visit. He had come to bring them good news of peace.¹⁴ He was quite ready to go to other tribes should they decide they did not want him in their midst. Wakefield reports that the Gallas pretended to be satisfied with Wakefield's explanation, but what they really wanted to know was whether he had the power to protect them from their adversaries, the Maasai.¹⁵

We need to understand that for a long time the Gallas had fallen victim to the surprise Maasai raids that left many killed and their cattle and other property plundered. At other times the Gallas had their huts burned to ashes and were forced to flee for their lives.¹⁶ It is no wonder that the Gallas would ask, as a matter of great concern, whether this menace could be turned aside. Wakefield's reply was that

¹²Ibid., p. 56.

¹³Ibid., p. 59.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁶R. Brewin, The Martyrs of Golbanti (London: Crombie, 1901), p. 97.

he could not defend them through his mighty strength. He, however, trusted in God who made all things new and possible. He offered to pray to this God who would protect them.¹⁷

Wakefield understood that the Galla leaders agreed that prayers should be said on their behalf if this would deter the Maasai from entering their territory. They did not, at this point, believe in Wakefield's God, but anything that could alleviate their immediate problem was worth trying.¹⁸ To Wakefield's understanding, the prayer meeting that was conducted at Weichu Hill was important. It was the first such devotional meeting that was held amongst people who held their traditional beliefs. They all had one common hope, however, that prayers would help in their present predicament.¹⁹ The Gallas who were prayerful people were very impressed, Wakefield understood, and made a request for another prayer meeting. This was a bridge of contact between the missionary and the Galla people. The advantage could not be taken immediately because of travelling difficulties, but the Gallas always dreamed of the "praying man" who lived at Ribe.

Accompanied by New, Wakefield revisited the Galla country in 1866. After many difficulties and procrastinations, they were able to

¹⁷Hopkins, Trail Blazers and Road Makers (London: Hook, n.d.), p. 37.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 38. The Gallas had their own way of offering prayers but expected the white man to cast his spell against their enemies.

¹⁹Wakefield, p. 64.

procure permission to see the chief.²⁰ The journey from Mombasa was made by dhow up to Lamu. From there they set out on foot to Kipini and Kau. From Kau they were just a day's journey to the king's residence. They were, however, handicapped by floods which made their dwelling places all the more uncomfortable and full of torments.²¹

The Galla guides, Dado, Guia Shelot and Hirebaya were indispensable to the whole expedition. They helped with the negotiations concerning the terms of entry and the nature of the toll. The usefulness of the other members of the party cannot be underestimated. Tbfiki, for example, was a Muslim but proved to be a useful, faithful and trustworthy servant.²² The success of the journey depended on all members of the caravan.

It should be pointed out that lack of communication was a hindrance to this early missionary enterprise. Missionaries could communicate only through the aid of interpreters, and one was never sure that what the speaker said was adequately passed on. The misconception which characterizes the whole missionary endeavour of the nineteenth century was that individuals who had religious concepts suited to their own cultural milieu could transmit them verbally to people who lived in totally different thoughtforms.²³ Not only did they come from a different environment, but even their teleology was quite different. The lack of response to the missionaries from their hearers was particularly

²⁰Charles New, Life, Wanderings and Labours in Eastern Africa (London: Cass, 1971), p. 253.

²¹Ibid., p. 221.

²²Hopkins, p. 40.

²³Kendall, p. 99.

discouraging to them.²⁴ Even though the missionaries took pains to learn the local African language, it took them rather a long time to become fluent and able to communicate adequately.

What little was learned in such short encounters was probably transmitted to the audience through the general conversation of the carriers and porters, rather than through the formal declarations by the missionaries themselves. There was no point of contact between the missionaries and their hearers; hence, the content of their preaching would be quite unintelligible.²⁵ The hearers must be commended for their patience, hospitality and lack of hostility under such circumstances. The visitors, on their part, were able to arouse a sense of curiosity, respect, and to a certain extent, invincibility. They were quick to build upon these characteristics in their follow-up endeavours.

Human relationships between Africans and Europeans are seen at their lowest ebb during these early encounters.²⁶ With a few exceptional cases, they were characterized by master-servant relationship. The best of them were teacher-pupil relationships.²⁷ These were prompted by many factors which included cultural, religious, racial and geographical differences. It was many generations before persons from such diverse backgrounds could work together exhibiting a sense of common humanity.²⁸

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Pointing more to "I-It" relationship as opposed to "I-Thou" relationship.

²⁸Ibid.

It was not easy for Wakefield and New to come to an agreement with the Gallas. Baraza after baraza had to be convened before a final decision was reached.²⁹ The missionaries were compelled to exercise a certain amount of patience, though as days passed by such a relationship became strained. At long last, thanks to the ingenious negotiator, Hirebaya, permission was granted to proceed to Ganda. This was a journey which the missionaries supposed to be full of hazards and dangers.³⁰ All available weapons were carefully scrutinized and put in readiness in case they were needed.

When they got to the landing place, a messenger was sent to the chief to inform him of the visitors' coming.³¹ Within a short time, the visitors found themselves in the presence of the Galla chief, Mara Barowat.³² What a disappointment to the missionaries: they did not find half their expectations. The Galla chief did not look as powerful and full of splendour as they had expected. He looked just like any other person. He seemed poor, and his status appeared somewhat obscure.³³ Wakefield and New anticipated meeting a powerful and authoritative figure whose word was law itself. Instead they found a man who had to consult his elders before making any decision.³⁴

The interest of the Gallas in their visitors did not last long, because they soon discovered that their celebrated guests were not in a

²⁹Wakefield, p. 94.

³⁰Hopkins, p. 40.

³¹New, p. 253.

³²Ibid., p. 252.

³³Ibid., p. 254.

³⁴Wakefield, p. 96.

position to defend them against their foe, the Maasai. When they agreed that a further visit would be welcome, it was with the desperate hope that the visitors would then come up with concrete ideas on how the Maasai threat could be thwarted.³⁵

New and Wakefield returned to Ribe with mixed feelings. They had not procured such good results as they had expected, but they had at least made some friends. The dream of establishing a mission station on the Tana River lingered in their minds.³⁶ At least there were some Gallas who had agreed to migrate to Ribe in the face of Maasai raids.³⁷ This was a god-given opportunity to convert a nucleus of the Galla community, and the missionaries were quick to seize such an opportunity.³⁸ Some of these Galla refugees were among the first converts to be baptized in 1870. Matthew Shakala, the famous catechist and teacher among the Galla people, was among the first band of converts who for many years lived in Ribe.

PLANTING THE CHURCH ALONG THE TANA RIVER

Jesus had started his ministry with a band of disciples who were being equipped so that they would spread out into all regions and proclaim

³⁵Ibid., p. 97. This was a life and death issue as far as Galla people were concerned.

³⁶Temu, p. 33.

³⁷Rebecca Wakefield, "From Mombasa to Meru--Fifty Years", Missionary Echo of the United Methodist Church, (July 1911), 153.

³⁸Ibid., p. 154.

the gospel. He had to begin with a nucleus of committed disciples who would be apprenticed and prepared to further the teachings, aims and aspirations of their master.

Wakefield and New wanted to follow this example. They instructed the few Gallas who had come to live at Ribe so that they could become evangelists to their own people.³⁹ They were aware that the strength and indeed the continuity of the mission depended, to a large extent, on the indigenous people. These evangelists would not only serve as the agents of the missionaries but would live the "Christian faith" in their ordinary daily tasks.⁴⁰

Mr. During of Sierra Leone is credited for starting the Galla mission at Golbanti, in 1884.⁴¹ We have seen that Mr. During had arrived in 1880, to assist Mr. Ramshaw who worked singlehandedly at Ribe. Mr. During proved to be not only a useful worker but a good colleague.⁴² He was asked to oversee the establishment of the mission station at Golbanti, together with putting up the necessary buildings. Among the Galla Christians who accompanied Mr. During during his historic expedition were Aba Shora, Matthew Shakala and Arthur Huko.⁴³ For two and a quarter years, Mr. During laboured with these local Christians to realize the establishment of a Christian mission in Galla land. It was not until January, 1886 that an English missionary was appointed to the already

³⁹R. Brewin, "Famous Names Recalled", Missionary Echo of the United Methodist Church (1909), 20.

⁴⁰Brewin, Martyrs of Golbanti, p. 90.

⁴¹Brewin, "Famous Names Recalled", p. 21.

⁴²E. S. Wakefield, p. 158.

⁴³Brewin, Martyrs of Golbanti, p. 89.

established mission. There was a general feeling that mission stations ought to have Europeans responsible for the general oversight and giving directives to the local evangelists. As a result of this policy, During had to go back to Ribe so that John and Annie Houghton could be appointed as resident missionaries.⁴⁴

Wakefield had been very keen to see that the Galla mission was established without further delay. When the mission committee seemed to be procrastinating, Wakefield had this to say:

If we do not bestir ourselves and take up a good position in the Galla country, where we may command growth and extension, the opportunity will pass out of our hands, and others will use it . . . and whilst other missions of the Christian Church in Africa will be flourishing like the green bay tree showing evidences of life by expansion, we shall be for ever simply amongst the Wanyika-- a small, inferior, stagnant race--fixed on the "stepping stones" and bounded on the north and south and west by the stations of other societies. With all my heart I say, God forbid!⁴⁵

No mention is made at this point of the Wapokomo, even though they lived around Golbanti and, in fact, side-by-side with the Wagalla. The missionaries were possessed with the dream of reaching out to the Galla people, to the extent of ignoring the Wapokomo completely.⁴⁶ The mission to the Wapokomo remained a side issue until it was discovered that the Galla people were not responding as enthusiastically as had been earlier envisaged.

⁴⁴E. S. Wakefield, p. 196.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 169.

⁴⁶B. J. Ratcliffe, "Our East Africa Mission", Missionary Echo of United Methodist Church (1911), 158.

In February, 1885 Wakefield, accompanied by the Rev. John Houghton, a new arrival, departed for Golbanti to see what progress Mr. During had made. During met them at Lamu, and the three men proceeded to Tany River district. After a short stay, Wakefield returned to Ribe while Houghton and During were left to set the ground for the mission. It was hoped that when everything had been set, During would return to Ribe, leaving Houghton to bear responsibility for the Galla mission.

MARTYRS ON THE TANA RIVER

John and Annie Houghton had arrived in East Africa in November, 1884. They first lived at Ribe, learning Kiswahili and helping Mr. Wakefield with routine work at Ribe and Jomvu stations until their removal to Golbanti in early 1886.⁴⁷ It was at Ribe that they first met Bishop Hannington, the first CMS Bishop, who was murdered by the Kabaka's orders in 1886.⁴⁸ The Houghtons, who survived Bishop Hannington for a period of six months, were also murdered by the Maasai at Golbanti.⁴⁹ This was the only known instance where missionaries were actually killed by the inhabitants. Most of the deceased died as a result of illness or other natural calamities.

The Maasai were the dreaded enemies of the Galla people because

⁴⁷Brewin, Martyrs of Golbanti, p. 72.

⁴⁸E. S. Wakefield, p. 240. The Kabaka was the ruler of Bugunda, a traditional monarchy.

⁴⁹Anderson, p. 8.

they were superior fighters and better organizers. Many a time they carried out their raids on the Galla, often devastating whole villages, killing men and taking women into captivity, taking all cattle, burning huts and leaving whole villages in a state of ruin. They were, therefore, a great terror to the Gallas. The Maasai were never known to fight during the night. Rather, they were known to stay under cover during the night, at dawn to form a cordon round their unsuspecting victims, and on a given sign swoop down on them. In such a surprise and sudden appearance they would paralyze their victims into inaction.⁵⁰

On February 24, 1886, such a raid was carried at Golbanti. The Maasai burned huts, took away cattle and killed between forty and fifty Gallas. Among those who died were four Christians, including Aba Shora, one of the earliest and most faithful converts.⁵¹ When the marauding Maasai had left, it was hoped that it would be a long time before they would come back. The little band of Christians who had been deprived of four faithful members buried and mourned their dead and then pulled themselves together in order to concentrate upon their task of winning more souls for Christ.⁵²

It did not take a long time for the Maasai to return to Golbanti. Another such raid was made on the third of May, while the earlier one was still fresh in people's memories.⁵³ At about half-past eight in the morning, the Maasai invaded the station and caught the people by surprise.

⁵⁰Brewin, Martyrs of Golbanti, p. 95.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 96.

⁵²Ibid., p. 97.

⁵³Ibid., p. 119.

On this occasion John and Annie Houghton were killed.⁵⁴ Many of the Christians and those who worked in the mission station were either killed or drowned. Only a few escaped the wrath of the Maasai. A tragedy had befallen the young Christian center. This was a great setback to the work of the Methodist mission on the Tana River.⁵⁵

GALLA MISSION RE-VISITED

The mission was not to be lost even though it was becoming increasingly difficult to find the right people. The Rev. Mr. W. G. Howe, who was appointed to Tana River in 1888, and the Rev. Mr. Edmonds, his colleague who arrived in East Africa in 1891, were doing all they could to revitalize the young Church. Just when Mr. Howe was about to visit England, Mr. Edmonds was taken ill.⁵⁶ It proved to be a dangerous illness, and he later died as a result. Changes of plans had to be made to ensure that a European superintendent had the oversight of Golbanti. Mr. Ormerod, who had been stationed at Ribe when he arrived in October 192,⁵⁷ went to Golbanti in May 1893. He was the only European on the station, and he naturally felt very lonely. He sought companionship at Ngao where a number of German missionaries under the Neukirchen mission resided and worked among the Wapokomo.⁵⁸

The Neukirchen mission had occupied Ngao in 1888. Since this post was actually on the land granted to Metoodists, a dispute arose

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 122.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 127.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 24.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 46.

which was settled by a division of land. The Germans opened a chain of stations up the Tana as far as Hola.

Ormerod made a great contribution in taking upon himself the task of surveying all the Galla country and ascertaining their numbers and stations.⁵⁹ In 1895 he made a three-months' tour of the area, carefully taking down all the details. He took great pains to estimate the population of the people living in each particular town. The report which he took home was very impressive, and the Geographical Journal published an account of it.⁶⁰

He estimated the Gallas to be just about five thousand people while the population of Wapokomo was estimated to be 14,760.⁶¹ These figures revealed that there were more Wapokomo than there were Wagalla. It was an early indication that the Methodists were working among very few people who were scattered over a large area. The work among the Wapokomo was left to the Neukirchen mission. At this stage, the Methodists had still not contemplated opening any station among the Wapokomo.⁶²

Ormerod found himself helping the colonial administrator to annex the territory to the British crown. On one occasion, he helped Mr. Anderssen, the government District Officer, to get the Galla chiefs to sign a treaty which would place their people under the Queen's

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 80.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 90.

⁶¹Missionary Echo of the United Methodist Church (1896), 179.

⁶²Ibid.

protection.⁶³ This meant that Ormerod, with his knowledge of the local people and local dialect, was helping the government to colonize the Galla people. They were not impressed by his disclaimer that he was merely acting as a friend of both parties. They understood him to have a vested interest in the affair.⁶⁴

Mr. Ormerod was getting impatient with the lack of enthusiasm of the Wagalla. The Galla mission was not showing signs of growth. Indeed the work was stagnating and showing dangerous signs of collapse. In 1897, the society's evangelistic efforts were extended to the Wapokomo.⁶⁵ Mr. Consterdine came to assist with this branch of the work.⁶⁶ It was difficult to maintain the Pokomo branch of the mission outreach without at the same time neglecting the Galla mission. Ormerod was of the opinion that the latter had a prior claim on his attention. The Wapokomo showed some enthusiasm in their attendance to both the school and the Church. Soon schools were opened at Golbanti and Bura in order to cater to the growing numbers of the Wapokomo.⁶⁷

At the beginning of 1899, Bobuoya was opened as a new station for Wapokomo and was assigned to Consterdine for pastoral oversight.⁶⁸ There were very high hopes connected with this station, since Ormerod remarks excitedly:

⁶³Joseph Kirsop, Life of Robert Moss Ormerod (London: Crombie, 1901), p. 92.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 93.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 120.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 121.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 129.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 133.

"Bobuoya" we are told, means a place of weeping, and appropriate is the name, for weeping was the accompaniment of the intertribal wars that used to be waged on the Tana, when many Pokomos and Gallas were killed or taken captive at this place. We hope to hear of no more weeping at Bobuoya, except it be penitent souls weeping their way to Calvary.⁶⁹

The first Wapokomo Christians received baptism on Easter Sunday of 1899. The event marked a gradual shift of emphasis, from a Galla-oriented mission to a determined effort to include the Wapokomo, who seemed to be more responsive to the gospel.⁷⁰ Among them was Joseph Jara who proved to be an ardent and promising student. He soon entered the work of the Church as a catechist. Mr. Griffiths describes him as "the most godly and successful preacher in our mission, equal to any European."⁷¹ When the Methodist Church later ceased to operate in Tana River, Jara was transferred to Mazeras where he was eventually ordained a minister, in 1932.

The Wapokomo had for their residence the banks and adjoining land of the Tana River. They were to be found principally on the banks of the river, since the interior was occupied by the Gallas, Korokoro and the Somalis.⁷² Wapokomo were found to be religious and reverent, with "a genius for worship, a capacity for adoration, which does not come readily to the average Englishman."⁷³ Their religious genius and

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 130.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 135.

⁷¹J. B. Griffiths, "News from Mazeras", Missionary Echo of the United Methodist Church (1907), 223.

⁷²J. Jackson, "The Wapokomo", Missionary Echo of the Methodist Church (1927), 70.

⁷³Ibid.

their awareness of the deity was a source of astonishment to a new missionary.

After the deaths of Ormerod and Consterdine in 1899 and 1902 respectively, and more specifically after the opening of the Meru mission in 1913, no concentrated effort was made on the Tana River mission. Missionaries found it difficult to work among the defiant and proud Gallas.⁷⁴ Around 1905, the hope of influencing the Gallas through Christianity was finally abandoned. Even though Wapokomo Christians had shown some enthusiasm, they were left mainly to themselves. For more than thirty years, the little remnant of Wapokomo Christians received neither general oversight by European missionaries, nor financial aid to assist in extending the work already begun.⁷⁵ Yet they kept their faith and out of their own minimal resources managed to send a teacher to Kibusu to open the work there.⁷⁶

The Golbanti and Kibusu societies could not remain permanently on their own. They were encouraged to join the Neukirchen mission, but they adamantly held to their own. The synod of the Methodist Church, however, forced them to accept the offer to join the German mission. In 1936 the synod of the Methodist Church passed a resolution to the effect that:

The advice of the missionary committee having been sought with regard to the difficulty of administering the two isolated societies

⁷⁴A. J. Hopkins, "Abandoning an Old Mission Station", Kingdom Overseas (1936), 158.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 159.

of Golbanti and Kibusu on the Tana River, this synod now instructs the chairman to proceed to the Tana to arrange for the transfer of these societies to the Neukirchen mission. In passing this resolution, the synod would place on record the fact that this transfer is not lightly resolved upon. The sheer impossibility of ministering to the spiritual necessities of these societies alone impels us to take action.⁷⁷

By sheer coincidence this arrangement, mutually agreed upon by the two societies, did not last long. The Neukirchen mission, which was German in origin, had been founded in 1882 by Pastor Doll as a "faith mission".⁷⁸ During the first World War, this mission was forced to discontinue its work, which had been mainly centered around the Wapokomo villages. In 1916, the care of their field of operation fell upon the Methodist Missionary Society, hence the Methodists had to go back to Tana River.⁷⁹ The Neukirchen mission was allowed to return to the area in 1925, but its missionaries were interned once again during the second World War. This sphere of operation then fell permanently upon the Methodists, since any efforts by the Neukirchen mission to go back were strongly rejected by the government authorities.

The turn of events made it impossible for the Methodist Missionary Society to wash its hands of the responsibility to evangelize the Tana

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 159.

⁷⁸H.R.A. Philp, A New Day In Kenya (London: World Dominion Press, 1936), 123. "Faith missions" drew their missionaries from different denominations. They were evangelical in theology and did not have a guaranteed income. Missionaries were responsible for raising money for their support in the mission field. Major "faith missions" in Kenya were A.I.M., the Gospel Missionary Society, and the Pentecostal missions.

⁷⁹Ibid. Cf. H.O. Weller, A Short History of Kenya Colony (Nairobi: C.M.S. Bookshop, 1941), p. 66.

River. It was as if fate had determined that the Methodists should continue with what seemed to be their dream from the beginning. With all due respects, however, the Galla mission had become a failure.

It is only through annals of history that Galla Christians of the calibre of Aba Shora and Matthew Shakala will be remembered.⁸⁰ Even with the kind of heroism and endurance that characterized the early missionaries, the cold reality had to be driven home--the Galla mission had failed.⁸¹

REFLECTIONS ON THE FAILURE OF THE GALLA MISSION

It is nearly a hundred years since an unsuccessful attempt was made to convert the Gallas by the U.M.F.C. In retrospect, it is possible to perform a historical postmortem on the events and activities of the early Methodist missionaries. Some people may feel that a missionary reckoning is neither necessary nor important, that it falls into the danger of ungrateful criticism of devoted pioneers. But self-understanding as well as the discovery of the raison d'etre for this missionary endeavour require reflection on both failures and successes of these evangelistic enterprises.

This is an attempt, albeit in a modest manner, to delve into the apparent factors that may have contributed to the failure of the Galla mission. These will not be the only reasons for the failure, but will, I

⁸⁰R. T. Worthington, "How Dreams are Fulfilled," Kingdom Overseas, I (1933), 165.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, p. 166.

believe, shed some light on the mysteries surrounding such a failure, especially in the light of the success of similar attempts were made in other areas.⁸² After making such an analysis, many people will, I have no doubt, exclaim, "déjà vu". The same reasons could, perhaps, be offered in relation to other mission fields. Suffice it to say that this is an attempt to provide an objective critique of the Galla mission, with a view to providing a basis for the understanding of the Christian missions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Perhaps this will help the churches to offer sound policies for their future missions.

One of the main reasons why the Galla were not attracted to Christianity was that, to their eyes, the missionaries were closely allied to the colonial administration. In 1898, for example, Ormerod and Consterdine helped the sub-commissioner of Witu to promulgate important edicts that affected the Galla people.⁸³ After the promulgation of the abolition of domestic slavery among the Gallas, Ormerod defiantly exclaimed, "We missionaries intend to keep a vigilant look-out, and see that the order is obeyed."⁸⁴

At another palaver with the Wapokomo, Mr. Anderssen, the sub-commissioner, promulgated a number of orders. One order required compulsory licensing of traders on the Tana. Another order required the Wapokomo who had surplus food to dispose of, to sell to the Government regardless of whether they could get a better price elsewhere. The

⁸²At Ribe, Jomvu, Mazeras and later on, in Meru.

⁸³Kirsop, p. 126.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 127.

third order prohibited advances that were made on growing crops, while the practice of supplying goods on credit to soldiers was discontinued.⁸⁵ Both Consterdine and Ormerod were present, and the latter acted as the interpreter.⁸⁶ In such an instance, it was natural that the Gallas should associate missionaries with government administrators.

Collaboration between missionaries and colonial administrators was seen in other ways. Free land was leased to the missions by the government agent.⁸⁷ In return, the missionaries occupied the role of counsellors and amateur magistrates whose duty was to see that the law was obeyed and to settle local disputes.⁸⁸ Such practice was not confined to the Methodist missionaries. The CMS missionaries seemed to favour this model of relationship. When H. W. Lane, a CMS missionary stationed at Freretown, heard that a vice-consul was being appointed for Mombasa, he requested advice from the central committee in London whether he should apply for the post. His justification for such a post was that it might strengthen and enhance his social standing.⁸⁹

Sir Charles Eliot, the commissioner for the East Africa Protectorate, acknowledged that missionaries working in the lower Tana had represented European influence almost entirely by themselves. He recommended that such co-operation should be enhanced in other areas.⁹⁰ In

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 124.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 123.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 128.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 137.

⁸⁹Lane to the Central Committee, October 11, 1882, G3/A5/P2, C.M.S. Archives, London.

⁹⁰Sir Charles N.W. Eliot, The East African Protectorate (London: Arnold, 1905), p. 241.

1894 Thomas Wakefield lamented the lack of foresight on the part of British officials who had refused to annex the East Coast of Africa in 1823.⁹¹ His concern was not only that slavery would have been eradicated, but that it would have been a valuable acquisition for England by strengthening her East Indian possessions.⁹² There is little doubt that the Gallas were convinced that the missionaries were there to help the colonial administration. This perception could have been strengthened by the plotting of Arab slavers who were angered by the attitude the missionaries took against the slave trade. The Arabs have been understood as ready to employ any means that could discredit the missionaries to the Gallas.⁹³

Another factor that contributed to the failure of the mission was the inability of the missionaries to protect the Gallas from the Maasai incursions, as the Gallas had hoped they could.⁹⁴

The Gallas probably thought that the white missionaries had the power by means of the gun to discourage the Maasai from perpetrating their frequent attacks upon the Galla people. The first prayer meeting

⁹¹Thomas Wakefield, "East Africa", Missionary Echo of the United Methodist Church, (1894), 40.

⁹²Ibid., p. 41. Charles New was convinced that England ought to establish on the East Coast, a colony analogous to Sierra Leone. (New, p. 506.

⁹³Interview with Michael Gafo, January 4th, 1979.

⁹⁴E. S. Wakefield, p. 95. The missionaries were allowed to stay with the understanding that they would be able to quell the Maasai invasion.

conducted by Wakefield was believed to be interpreted as the white man's sorcery to cast a spell against the marauding Maasai.⁹⁵ To their disillusionment, they soon found that the white man himself fell victim to the Maasai when the Houghton family was killed.⁹⁶ That was an indication to the Gallas that the missionaries were unable to defend them from the Maasai attacks.

A third reason for the failure was the inability of the missionaries to comprehend local customs and traditions. To a large extent, the missionaries failed to appreciate or even understand the Galla customs and behaviour. They condemned long-held traditions as being devilish, heathen or immoral.⁹⁷ They saw nothing good in traditional dances and music. Initiation ceremonies were condemned as being incompatible with Christianity.⁹⁸

Perhaps a serious weakness of the mission was the practice of inducing people to attend worship services and school by means of gifts and presents.⁹⁹ It had become customary to give chiefs and other influential parties such gifts as might induce them to show favour toward the Christian missions. Concerning this matter, Mrs. Houghton wrote:

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 66.

⁹⁶Brewin, Martyrs of Golbanti, p. 121.

⁹⁷Kirsop, p. 58.

⁹⁸J. H. Duerden, "The Gallas," Missionary Echo of the United Methodist Church (1902), 167.

⁹⁹R. Brewin, "Charles New," Missionary Echo of the United Methodist Church (1906), 44.

We have been pretty unsettled ever since our arrival, partly owing to the difficulties inherent in missionary life, and partly owing to the excessive demands made upon us by these Gallas. . . . They have had much from the society, and seem to regard us only as a means of further supply. . . . To be on good terms with the chief, the law is 'give him much, he likes you much'."¹⁰⁰

This state of affairs was not peculiar to the Galla mission. The CMS mission was falling into the same trap. The missionary committee in London was growing concerned about the excessive demands made by chieftains in office, under the form of "hongo" and presents, with which from their nature and extent, the committee did not think it right to comply. A general ruling was made to the effect that such presents should be given as might be regarded as equivalents for value received or to be received in the form of food, land or labour, or as being like tolls or taxes.¹⁰¹ It was felt that missionaries ought to lead chiefs to regard their presence as a privilege and blessing to the people. The practice of being over-generous was to be discouraged, since it misled the chiefs to suspect that missionaries had some ulterior political motives for the advancement of which they felt it worthwhile to pay expensively.¹⁰²

Missionaries thought that the Gallas felt that since the missionaries were, in fact, paying them to attend services and school, there was a motive behind it. They assumed that the missionaries were ready to manipulate their good will to further their self-interests, by acquiring

¹⁰⁰Brewin, Martyrs of Golbanti, p. 103.

¹⁰¹Church Missionary Intelligencer, XIII (August 1862), 338.

¹⁰²C.M.S. Central Committee, July 3, 1888, G3/A5/P3, C.M.S. Archives, London.

land or political influence. This perception by the Gallas greatly hindered the missionary course.¹⁰³

Alienation of land was another thorny problem. The United Methodist Mission had embarked on commercial agriculture on an appreciable scale. This was partly as a way of supporting the mission locally and partly as a witness to the Church's involvement in agricultural training. In Tana River, for example, the mission had acquired six thousand acres of land.¹⁰⁴

The Gallas must have misunderstood the intentions of the missionaries and wondered whether the motive was to rob them of their land. Today some people living in the area believe that the Gallas identified workers in these estates with domestic slaves. They wondered, therefore, whether the missionaries had not played a trick on them by requesting them to set their slaves free so that the missionaries could in turn engage the same people for their own gain.¹⁰⁵ The Arab slavers were especially keen to show the Gallas that those missionaries were out to exploit them on the pretext of religion. According to Mr. Gafo's observation, the Gallas were made to think that the missionaries were just as bad as the colonizers.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³Kirsop, p. 77.

¹⁰⁴Kilifi Political Records, Vol. II, Annual Report 1910-1911, KFI II, Kenya National Archives, Nairobi.

¹⁰⁵Interview with Michael Gafo, January 4th, 1979.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

This lack of success by the Methodists might be partly attributed to the calibre of the persons who were sent to Tana River, partly to the general conditions of life in Tana River during the nineteenth century, and partly to the harshness of the East African coastal climate. The Methodist missionaries in the area were not of the stature of, say the Rev. Henry Scott of the Presbyterian mission, the Rev. W. S. Price of the Church missionary Society or Cardinal Lavigerie of the Catholic mission in Uganda. This fact coupled with the toll of the climate, which was so high that no missionary could boast of having lived in the area for a prolonged period of time,¹⁰⁷ contributed to the failure. Another factor worth considering is the impact of the slave trade on the people, plus the Maasai raids that had an unsettling effect on the people.

The meager resources of the Methodist Mission also contributed to the failure. It was not possible to send enough missionaries to the mission field because of lack of finances. No more than two missionaries were stationed in the Tana at any given time. The Neukirchen Mission, a German Congregationalist Mission, may have been more successful when they worked among the Wapokomo because of their high motivation and the fact that they were able to secure more missionaries for the work.¹⁰⁸

It was above all the result of the political and social organization of the Gallas society that the efforts of the Methodist missionaries proved abortive. The Galla were and still are pastoralists, unlike the

¹⁰⁷Church Missionary Intelligencer, IX (1873), 334-335.

¹⁰⁸This view is expressed by a former missionary at the Coast. G. Martlew, "Notes and Recollections" (Mimeographed notes) p. 23, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

Wapokomo who were agriculturalists. Attempts to reorganize them into villages for missionary expediency failed because the Gallas wandered with their animals, depending on the availability of good pastures. The only solution would have been for the missionaries to adopt such a pastoral way of life. Since the missionaries were used to the more convenient method of building a permanent station around which all missionary activities revolved, an attempt was made to regulate, or possibly change the life style of the Galla people.

Insofar as the Gallas felt the need to come to terms with the ideas of the outer world, the appeal of Islam, strongly oriented towards accommodating some of the local customs, was much greater than that of Christianity. The demands of Islam were slight and mainly confined to outward observance. The Gallas became nominal Muslims as a way of acquiring social status.¹⁰⁹ The apparent rebuff against Christianity by the Gallas disillusioned the Methodist Mission which turned to Wapokomo in a desperate bid to justify its presence in the area.

When we reflect historically on the founders of the Galla mission, we see them like all other persons in the ambiguity of the human condition. They were intrinsically conditioned by their own cultural milieu and religious background. If we make allowance for their culture-conditioned Christianity, we shall discover that they had a powerful desire to communicate the gospel, though necessarily in the form that made sense to them. As committed Christians who came from an evangelical-conservative

¹⁰⁹ Anderson, p. 64.

background influenced by pietistic doctrines, they made human mistakes with every intention of converting the Gallas to Christian faith. If they failed among the Gallas, they succeeded among the Wapokomo who lived almost side-by-side with them. They believed that they had a message to tell and did their best to put it across.

Chapter V

THE OPENING OF THE INTERIOR TO THE GOSPEL
MISSION TO THE HIGHLAND PEOPLE--MERU DISTRICT
(1912 - 1928)

The granting of the Royal Charter to the Imperial British East African Chartered Company in 1888 had a direct bearing on the expansion of the missionary activities.¹ Sir William Mackinnon, the company's director, encouraged the missions to open up the work among the people with whom they had some influence. Being a Scotsman himself, he encouraged the establishment of the East African Scottish Mission.²

Mackinnon requested the Free Church of Scotland Mission to release Dr. James Stewart to proceed to East Africa. Dr. Stewart of Lovedale was the successor of Livingstone in Nyasaland. Despite the fact that he was nearly sixty at the time of Mackinnon's request, he accepted the challenge with gratitude. On September 19, 1891, Stewart left for the interior with an expedition of seven missionaries and 273 porters. The original purpose of this mission was to go as far as Kikuyuland; but due to the turbulence of the Kikuyu people, they settled at Kibwezi on 16th October, 1891.³ On December 7, 1891, Stewart signed

¹H.R.A. Philp, A New Day in Kenya (London: World Dominion Press, 1936), p. 15.

²Ibid.

³Ibid. At Dagoretti, which was the intended destination, it became impossible to establish a station since the people there were in armed revolt against the Company.

an agreement with the local chief, Kilundu, for the purchase of 300 acres of land.⁴

From the start the mission encountered numerous misfortunes. Many lives were lost, famine struck, and these together with occasional attacks by the Maasai forced the home committee to sanction the local staff's ultimatum that the mission be removed to Kikuyu.⁵ The choice of a site at Kibwezi was a mistake from the beginning. Malaria and black-water fever were rampant in the area, and there were scanty settlements of the Kamba people around the mission station.

Nonetheless, a beginning was made in agricultural development. At Kibwezi coffee was introduced into the country, for the first time, by a missionary agriculturalist by the name of John Patterson. Coffee and vegetables were successfully grown with the aid of irrigation ditches from the Kibwezi Stream.⁶

It was the Rev. Thomas Watson who was charged with the responsibility of transferring the mission to Kikuyu. This was done in August, 1898, and by 1899 a mission station was built at Thogoto.⁷ As a result of the development of the railway, other missions felt compelled to move inland.

⁴B. G. McIntosh, "The Pioneer Days of the Scottish Mission," East African Standard, Nairobi, (March 22, 1968), 9.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Philp, p. 16. More coffee crop was successfully grown at Kikuyu in 1898 with seeds brought from the Scottish Mission at Sheik Othman, Eden.

⁷Ibid., p. 17. Cf. Roland Oliver, The Missionary Factor in East Africa (London: Longmans, 1952), p. 171. An attempt was made to purchase

After Bishop Peel of the Anglican Church had visited the Kikuyu country, the Church Missionary Society felt it was time they also moved inland. A. W. MacGregor, an Anglican minister, transferred from Taveta to Fort Smith in 1900 and the following year settled at Kihuruko.⁸ Other CMS stations were opened at Weithaga in 1903, Kahuhia in 1906, Mahiga in 1908 and Embu in 1910.⁹

The Africa Inland Mission, which was established as a "faith mission" on a basis similar to that of the China Inland Mission, also started its work in the interior, as its name implies. In 1901 Mr. Hurlburt, the General Director of Africa Inland Mission, established the headquarters of the mission at Kijabe.¹⁰ Their objective was to evangelize all unevangelized tribes of Kenya. They made an attempt to reach the Maasai and the Kalenjin tribes without much success.

Roman Catholic interests in British East Africa had originated in the Kilimanjaro Missions of the Holy Ghost Fathers. Having established themselves in Mombasa in 1890, Bishop Allgeyer planted a station in Nairobi in 1899.¹¹ Realizing that his society alone could not stand the challenge of opening up new areas, he invited the Mission of the Institut

a plot at Dagoretti without success. In August 1899, 40 acres of land were bought from Munyua wa Waiyaki. In 1901 the East Africa Scottish Mission became the Church of Scotland Mission. Cf. R. MacPherson, The Presbyterian Church in Kenya (Nairobi: 1970), p. 32.

⁸C.M.S. Proceedings, 1900-1901, p. 116.

⁹Oliver, p. 169.

¹⁰Philp, p. 18.

¹¹Oliver, p. 170. This is the year that the railway reached Nairobi.

de la Consolata with its headquarters at Turin, Italy, to come to aid the expansion of the work.¹² The first missionaries of the latter came to Kenya in 1902. Stations were opened at Kiambu in 1902, Limuru in 1903, Mangu in 1906 and Nyeri in 1905.¹³ The expansion of the missions to the interior, we must emphasize, had depended upon the building of the Kenya-Uganda railway.¹⁴ The decision to build the railway had its origin in the Brussels Act of 1890 by which European nations were committed to the construction of roads and railways within their spheres of influence as an infrastructure to enhance economic growth as well as suppression of the slave trade. The railway reached Nairobi in 1899, and from there onwards access to the interior was easy, safe, and uneventful.

The Methodist Mission was unable to open up their work in the interior at this time owing to the problem of securing enough resources and personnel to support their aspirations. Even though the Conference of the United Methodist Church in England had made a decision in 1910 to occupy Meru, that decision was not immediately implemented.¹⁵

As early as 1907 Griffiths had made an official application to the Government for permission to open up work in Embu, a District

¹²Ibid., pp. 170-171

¹³Philp, p. 135.

¹⁴Ibid., (footnote) p. 19.

¹⁵A. J. Hopkins, Trail Blazers and Road Makers (London: Hooks, n.d.), p. 100. From about 1900, Griffiths had been prodding the home committee to commit itself to seize their rightful opportunity by securing a territory in the interior.

adjacent to Meru.¹⁶ He was advised that the district was "closed";¹⁷ but during his furlough in England, it was offered to the CMS who had negotiated and procured amicable agreement with the African Inland Mission and the Scottish Mission. The CMS eventually occupied it.¹⁸

After securing an interview with the Government, Griffiths was offered another closed District, Meru, by the Governor himself. He was given leave to occupy it at his convenience. In 1910 Griffiths, accompanied by Mr. Bassett, a ministerial colleague, decided to travel to Meru, a journey of over 500 miles, to discover things for themselves.¹⁹ At the time pacification of the Chuka people was in progress, hence the route through Embu was highly dangerous.²⁰ Since the first journey was undertaken with the sole purpose of mapping out the area and making recommendations to the home committee, a second such expedition was inevitable.

The District Officer estimated the population to be about 200,000, and Griffiths felt that figure to be an underestimation.²¹

¹⁶J. B. Griffiths, "Our Extension in East Africa," Missionary Echo of the United Methodist Church (June 1910), 121.

¹⁷A "Closed" District was not open to everyone. It was restricted to only Government Officers.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 122.

¹⁹Hopkins, p. 97.

²⁰Interview with Kornelio Mukiira December 15, 1974. The Meru District was occupied by the British Administrator in 1908, and by 1910 it had been pacified under Mr. Horne (Kangangi), the District Officer. At this time a heavy punitive expedition against the Chuka people was in progress.

²¹Griffiths, p. 123.

The second journey to Meru was made by Griffiths and Mimmack, an agriculturalist by profession and a lay missionary, in September, 1912.²²

With fifty employees they started building the intended mission house as well as clearing the ground. Within one month a log cabin had been erected which had thatch on the roof.²³ While Griffiths returned to the coast where he was stationed, Mr. Mimmack was left to consolidate what was already begun.²⁴

The Rev. Mr. R. T. Worthington has been known as the pioneer of the Meru Mission. He was chosen to direct the operation of the mission, which was crowned with high hopes from the very beginning.²⁵ To prepare himself for the task ahead of him, Worthington opted to enter Livingstone College in order to acquire some medical knowledge to help him in his work.²⁶ He had a six-month course in nursing and acquired a rudimentary knowledge of general medicine. Speaking about his call and vision for the new mission, Worthington says:

²²J. B. Griffiths, "The Occupation of Meru", Missionary Echo of the United Methodist Church (February 1913), 25. Cf. Hopkins, p. 100.

²³Ibid., p. 28.

²⁴Interview with Kornelio Mukiira, December 15th, 1974. Kornelio states that he was a youth when the first missionaries arrived. He was an eye-witness on the arrival of the first British administrator in Meru (Kangangi). Mimmack could not become the superintendent of the mission because he was a layman.

²⁵R. T. Worthington, "My Call to Meru," Missionary Echo of the United Methodist Church (1912), 272.

²⁶Ibid.

There has come to me also this conviction, that these people must be saved. To think of them in their barbarism, and in their paganism is surely more than can be endured by anyone who boasts the touch of Christ. For Christ embues with the desire to raise and save the downcast and sin-sick souls of men. And those negroes, black brethren of ourselves, now appeal not less strongly than do the needy ones at home. They must be saved.²⁷

Worthington was determined to do the best he could to make the new mission a success. Having been appointed in 1912, he reached his station at Kaaga in 1913.²⁸ He and Mimmack, his companion, were greatly helped by the services rendered by Daudi M. Ituma, who had been trained at Kikuyu (Kambui) by the Presbyterians.²⁹ He served adequately as a catechist, a teacher and an interpreter, since he could understand English. He helped the missionaries tremendously in their attempt to learn the Kimeru Language.³⁰ It did not take them a long time to get started in their task of organizing the station and getting involved in the evangelistic enterprises around the villages that were close to the mission.

Mr. Worthington, who lived in Kenya from 1912-23 and again from 1928-32, was the bulwark behind the Meru Mission. He inaugurated the school in 1913, incorporating both academic and technical knowledge.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 272-273.

²⁸Interview with Kornelio Mukiira, December 15, 1974.

²⁹Interview with Samson M'Mutiga on December 18, 1974. Samson was one of the first boys to attend mission school. He was aged 14 and was badly burned in the arsonry incident of 1914.

³⁰Ibid.

Woodwork and agriculture were introduced.³¹ After the coastal experience, Meru was regarded by Europeans as an "El Dorado". Mr. Worthington wished to dismiss this idea from the Mission Committee lest people in England think missionaries in Meru had an easy time but admitted, nevertheless, that the missionaries in Meru were enjoying better health than those elsewhere.³²

During the First World War the mission suffered from isolation from the rest of the country, and more importantly, from the conscription of the able-bodied men.³³ The men who had shown signs of making progress in education were in great demand and were enlisted into the army.

Even though the school was coming along well, there were moments of anxiety. The fire of 1914 that left five of the original twelve boys burned to death brought about a cloud of uncertainty.³⁴ The girls' response to education and the general status of women caused some concern. If no girls went to school and consequently become Christians, it would be difficult for Christian men to get their spouses, unless of course, they reverted to marry "heathens", an act "forbidden to them by the rules of the Church and by express injunction of St. Paul."³⁵ Girls did not

³¹"The Passing of a Great Missionary," Kingdom Overseas, I (1933), 275.

³²R. T. Worthington, "Methodist Foreign Committee Minutes" (hereafter referred to as "M.F.C.M."), 1916, p. 70.

³³Interview with Isaac M. Ithiri on December 19, 1974.

³⁴Interview with Kornelio Mukiira on December 15, 1974.

³⁵R. T. Worthington, "M.F.C.M.", 1917, p. 60.

begin to attend school until 1922 when the first woman missionary was appointed.

Despite these setbacks, the first eleven baptisms were conducted in 1916.³⁶ It was a time for jubilation and thanksgiving, as this event marked the beginning of a new era in the Meru Mission. Africans started taking interest and getting involved in the affairs of the Mission.³⁷ Local leaders like Philip M. Inoti started to emerge and take their place in the sphere of evangelization.³⁸

Between 1918 and 1919 another misfortune struck. There was the double scourge of famine and influenza. It is estimated that 25 percent of the population died through this.³⁹ A lot of people flocked into the Church as a result. The Church had become a refuge for the hungry and the destitute. Not all who came to Church were Christians, but owing to the nature of events and the ultimatum promulgated by the missionaries, that everyone who lived in the mission station must attend worship services, many found their place in Church.⁴⁰ At this time Church attendance was

³⁶Ibid., p. 61.

³⁷Interview with Samson M. Mutiga, December 19, 1974.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹"Three African Missionaries," Kingdom Overseas (July 1933), 162.

⁴⁰Interview with Hezekiah M. Mukiri, December 20, 1974. The cause of famine (Kiaramu) was the failure to rain for two successive seasons together with oft-repeated invasions of great swarms of locusts. The Government's efforts to import food were thwarted by heavy rains that rendered the roads impassable.

reported to be high. The congregation was made up, of course, of many unfortunate persons who made their dwelling places around the mission station, no doubt as a means of procuring bread to eat.⁴¹

Doubtless in such a crisis there emerged a process which constrained some to become Christians and support the Church. A process was begun whereby ties that bound people to the old way of life gave way to the new way that was demanding a decision to become a Christian adherent. For the most part this was an unconscious process, even though it seemed to begin as soon as the real congruence had taken place.⁴² Through school and the benefits that were brought by education, people were drawn closer to the Church slowly but surely. It would be a matter of time before they confessed that they had become Christians. Eventually a Christian fellowship was created with local initiative but superficially with European supervision.

The attitude of the Meru people towards the missionaries was one of indifference. They liked to welcome the missionaries as their guests but did not feel constrained to deviate from their religious practices.⁴³ For the traditional Meru society, the whole of existence was a religious phenomenon. There was no dichotomy allowed to be drawn between what was sacred and what was profane.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Interview with Samson M. Mutiga, December 19, 1974.

⁴² Interview with Isaac M. Ithiri, December 19, 1974.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Interview with Hezekiah M. Mukiri, December 20, 1974.

The Ameru community was organized as the extended family; the clan and the tribe had the central place to assure harmony and peace which were essential elements of human existence. The severest punishment meted out to any individual was ostracism, which was equivalent to death itself.⁴⁵

The Ameru believed in God (Murungu) who possessed the ultimate authority in the created world. He was the creator and sustainer of everything in existence. Even though God could not be seen through human eyes, yet he manifested himself in such natural phenomena as sun, moon, stars, rain, thunder and lightning. God to Ameru had a special relationship with the Meru people. He lived in the heavens, yet his dwelling place was Mt. Kenya (Kirimaara). His shrines were kept around certain woods, and especially in connection with the Mugumo (*Ficus hochstetteri*) tree.

Murungu (God) was seen as remote from ordinary human existence. He was not to be disturbed by petty affairs. Only major catastrophes and services of thanksgiving warranted the attention of the Almighty. He could be propitiated through sacrifices. Blood sacrifices offered the medium through which reconciliation with unseen powers could be effected.

The idea that God could be conceived as having a son was repugnant to the Ameru. God could not have a son since it was not the nature of the deity to get a consort. God was neither father nor mother; he was the "great one" (Gitiije). The idea of the trinitarian God was

⁴⁵ Ibid. To be ostracized was to be cut off from the living community. Since there was no existence outside the community, the victim was presumed dead.

difficult to convey to an Ameru. A new sense of relationship of people with God was introduced, especially with regard to prayer. Even though the idea of prayer was not new, to offer personal prayers to God was a new concept. Prayers were offered on corporate basis, by a representative of the people, in their behalf to God. The Ameru understanding of God was wholly anthropocentric.

The advent of the missionaries brought a new approach to God which was quite different, and to a certain degree, opposed to the Meru understanding of "Murungu". Tribal authorities (the Kiama and Njuri) felt that their religion which knit all people together, forming a unique solidarity, was being eroded.⁴⁶ People became suspicious and resentful of the new ways that were brought by the "foreigners". They felt instinctively that their old order which kept the people together was now being challenged. It was being challenged by an authority which was being backed by an alien civilization which had neither continuity nor congruity with the former order.⁴⁷ To add to this confusion it was being said that a new idea of God was being spread. This new approach was incongruous with the accepted tribal norms and customs.⁴⁸ Long established and cherished tribal dances and customs were branded immoral or devilish.⁴⁹

⁴⁶A. J. Hopkins, "In Memoriam: Chief the Reverend Philip Muntu Inoti", Kingdom Overseas, XX (1952), 125.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Interview with Nahashon Ibiiri.

⁴⁹A. J. Hopkins, "The Complexity of Work in East Africa", Missionary Echo of the United Methodist Church, (1932), 145.

Those who accepted the new way had to cut themselves off from the rest of the society, including their relatives, and live at the mission station where they were protected from the influences of the tribal expectations.⁵⁰ The new initiates, the neophytes, had to wear different European-type clothing and emulate the missionary in every possible way. To be a Christian was synonymous to being civilized (i.e. having been to school). A "Muthomi" (reader) was one who copied European mannerisms.⁵¹ The traditional and known world was crumbling down. Those who accepted the new way took time before they could even find their own feet in a new world which seemed to have no sense of security. They were on a pilgrimage to the unknown, while the larger community demonstrated open hostility.⁵² The attitude of the community is reflected in the already mentioned incident where the hut in which the first school boys were sleeping was set afire, after the door had been fastened from the outside to prevent any escape. This was supposed to serve a deterrent to those who dared to question tribal authority and the accepted order.⁵³

It is against this background that the intrepid spirit of the indigenous pioneers of the Meru mission can be appreciated.

One of the first persons to be attracted to the mission was Philip M. Inoti, who later distinguished himself not only as an

⁵⁰ Interview with Kornelio Mukiira, December 15, 1974. To profess to be a Christian was equivalent to being dispossessed by one's community.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Interview with Hezekia M. Mukiri, December 20, 1974.

⁵³ Hopkins, "In Memoriam", p. 126.

ecclesiastical leader but a civil leader as well. He was among those boys who got injured during the fateful night when their house was put on fire. He became a minister in 1934 and later on became a chief also.

The following account is given by the Rev. Mr. Hopkins, who knew Philip well:

Philip Inoti developed into manhood, proud of his colour and his race. He had given his friendship to a white man and his loyalty to Christ, but he neglected none of the steps by which a Meru boy develops into full citizenship of his tribe; he revered the traditions of his ancestors, never despising them even when they had outlived their use for him; he maintained his respect for the tribal sanctions that through the generations had maintained the integrity and preserved the unity of his people. He never felt that in order to be a Christian he must cease to be a Meru. Nationality and Christianity were never to him opposing and exclusive loyalties.⁵⁴

Philip was very concerned about the social disruption of Meru customs which was brought about by the deliberate Christian condemnation of the social and cultural values of the Meru tribe.⁵⁵ He was instrumental in making it possible for Christians to have a share in the running of the tribal affairs in cooperation with the traditional Njuri. He was convinced that Christ came to fulfill the spiritual pilgrimage already under way through the tutelage of the traditional religion.⁵⁶ He strongly felt that "the Christian Church therefore must be a natural growth within the tribal life and not an alien culture foreign to them."⁵⁷

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 127. Rev. Hopkins worked with Philip for a long time, even when the latter became a chief.

⁵⁵Interview with Mrs. Bertha M. Inoti, on 18th December, 1974.

⁵⁶Interview with Kornelio Mukiira, December 15, 1974.

⁵⁷Hopkins, "In Memoriam", p. 127.

His caliber of leadership was further manifested in his being chosen as a chief in 1948. It was a rather difficult and cumbersome undertaking, trying to balance Church claims and that of a wider community. No one was fitted for the job better than Philip.⁵⁸ He threw himself into the work with such self-sacrificing enthusiasm that he used even to travel by night by the illumination of a spotlight.⁵⁹ This invariably earned him the nickname of "the torch" (Kinyinga). Philip continued to be faithful to his calling as a Church minister, without losing sight of the fact that "Good Life" can be earned only by following the footsteps of Christ.⁶⁰ This is the only known instance where the Methodist Church tried to combine temporal and ecclesiastical duties.

There were other local leaders besides Philip. These people were among the first catechists and teachers. Such leaders included Kornelio Mukiira, Stefano M. Ndegwa, Samson M. Mutiga, Hezekiah M. Mukiri, Andrew Mwereria, Paulo M. Itwoke and many more. These people carried the light of the gospel to remote places, while European missionaries lived at the Central Station at Kaaga with occasional supervision of the out-stations.⁶¹ African catechists and teachers organized new churches and schools and operated them informally. Only when they showed signs of growth did they call upon European missionaries to share in the task of

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 128.

⁶⁰Interview with Bertha M. Inoti, December 21, 1974.

⁶¹Interview with Samson M. Mutiga, December 19, 1974.

organization and planning.⁶² After the congregations were duly constituted, the "trail blazers" would move ahead to look for another station. The missionaries recognized that the progress of the mission mainly depended upon the faithfulness and involvement of the local evangelists, who were encouraged to take the initiative of converting their own people.⁶³

They were not, however, given the full responsibility of overseeing over the congregations they founded.⁶⁴ African pastors and evangelists were used to assist the missionary but not to supersede the latter. All administrative powers rested with the missionaries who were responsible to their home mission committees; hence, major decisions were made by mission officers in London.⁶⁵

Receptivity to the Gospel and New Ideas.

Like most African societies, Wameru were not eager to embrace the new religion. Their attitude can be described as that of "watch and see". They were afraid that by being initiated into the new religion, they would be leaving behind their traditional beliefs with their securities and guarantees.⁶⁶ The first converts, therefore, tended to be social misfits, stubborn youths and orphans. These were permitted to have a foretaste of what the new movement entailed.⁶⁷

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Interview with Ezekiel Rukaaria, December 19, 1974.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Interview with Nahashon Ibiiri.

⁶⁷Ibid.

Meru people were bound together by a network of traditions, beliefs and aspirations of the whole tribe. It was considered an act of treason for anyone to deviate from what was recognized as the tribal norm of behaviour. Such an act was punishable by death; hence Christians were defying the controls of their own community by embracing a new faith, being anti-social and questioning the very fabric of their existence. By refusing to participate in community affairs like dancing, ceremonial purification, the Kiama, Christians were seen to be disloyal to tribal authority.⁶⁸

It is against this background that the response of Meru people to the gospel must be viewed. Worthington, Hopkins and others made a calculated attempt to convert Wameru to Christianity. The process employed was that of detachment, that is the loosening of the ties which bound people to old ways and old patterns and making them independent to make decisions that the gospel demanded.⁶⁹ Often this took the form of cutting them off the rest of the community by letting them form another community around a mission station, in this instance, around Kaaga. They were thus protected from the tribal influences and could easily be supervised and instructed.⁷⁰

As time went on, there emerged a new community that was bound together by Christian regulations and laws that could only be broken on

⁶⁸Interview with Ezekiel Rukaaria, December 21, 1974.

⁶⁹Interview with Isaaka M. Ithiri. Cf. John V. Taylor, The Growth of the Church in Buganda (London: SCM Press, 1958), p. 44.

⁷⁰Interview with Bertha M. Inoti.

pain of excommunication.⁷¹ The laws that governed such communities were strictly enforced. These included daily Church attendance, presence in Sunday worship, acquiring European manners and clothing as well as attending catechumen classes. Many of the first converts came to the mission station as boys, were enrolled in school and later became missionary agents who helped in propagating the gospel. In the eyes of many reading and writing were respected as "white man's magic" which formed the source of his power. It was therefore felt to be advantageous if one could acquire such a magic and in consequence wield such power.⁷²

The education of the young people was not the only aspect of the missionary propaganda.⁷³ There was a concern to educate adults as well. Missionaries felt obliged to teach the adults and catechumens to read biblical passages because literacy was required for baptism. Public education was geared toward scripture reading; hence, for those who were unable to attend school, Sunday School classes or evening classes for adult literacy were instituted for their convenience.⁷⁴

It was generally envisaged that to know Christian principles one had to have access to Christian literature, notably, selected passages

⁷¹Interview with Samson M. Mutiga, December 19, 1974.

⁷²Interview with Hezekiah M. Mukiri.

⁷³J. Temu, *British Protestant Missions* (London: Longmans, 1972), p. 143.

⁷⁴Interview with Ezekiel Rukaaria, December 21, 1974.

from Scripture. In Meru St. Mark's and St. John's Gospels were translated for this purpose.⁷⁵ The school and the Church, begun at the same time in 1913 with complementary roles to play, claimed the allegiance of the Wameru, slowly but surely. The hostile attitude of the Wameru was being broken down to indifferent co-existence.⁷⁶

It has been narrated how the Methodist mission opened Meru as a missionary sphere because of the strong motivation to follow other missionary societies into the interior of Kenya. The first contact of Ameru and the missionaries was open conflict, but with the introduction of education and medical work, curiosity coupled with the need to acquire white man's magic led the Wameru to the pursuit of knowledge and power.

The steady progress made with the Meru mission should not mislead us to suppose that there was a smooth transition. There were rough edges indeed, especially as the result of the impact of Christian ethics upon traditional practices. This theme is treated in the next chapter under the general heading of cultural nationalism, and it shows the nature of the conflict and its consequences on missionary work.

⁷⁵R. T. Worthington, "The Fruits of Our Labour in Meru", Missionary Echo of the United Methodist Church (June 1931), 102.

⁷⁶Interview with Hezekiah M. Mukiri.

TABLE 1

A TABLE SHOWING THE GROWTH OF THE UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH IN KENYA

YEAR	FULL MEMBERS	INCREASE	DECREASE
1865	2		
1870	4	2	
1875	30	26	
1880	48	18	
1885	82	34	
1890	223	141	
1895	412	189	
1900	412	-	
1905	378	-	34
1907	404	26	
1912	495	91	
1917	576	81	
1922	479	-	97
1927	739	260	
1932	743	4	

SOURCE: "The Story of the United Methodist Church,"
(mimeographed notes), Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

TABLE 2

A TABLE SHOWING GROWTH OF THE METHODIST
MISSION IN MERU

YEAR	MEMBERS	S.S. SCHOLARS	DAY SCHOOL SCHOLARS	ADULT BAPTISMS
1919	19	49	44	7
1920	24	49	40	3
1921	30	60	60	
1922	43	60	60	12
1923	54	56		6
1924	59	60		
1927	64	295	332	34
1928	70	663	786	8
1929	90	320	663	10
1930	46	324	364	4
1931	74	283	511	26
1932			691	
1933	123	420	575	11
1934	126	725	1,953	21
1935	136	908	1,318	34
1936	162	1,564	1,277	43
1937	390	2,173	1,650	92
1938	434	2,977	1,285	237
1939	440	2,711	688	373

SOURCE: Compiled from the Statistical Returns,
Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

Chapter VI

RESISTANCE AS A CULTURAL NATIONALIST
MOVEMENT - (1929-1950)

The second half of the 1920's saw unprecedented development of political awareness, especially within the Central Province of Kenya. By 1925 especially in Kikuyuland, people were requesting the government to assist in sending students overseas for higher education. Land alienation by the British settlers was becoming a problem as there was not enough land to cater for the growing population. The Kikuyu Central Association, a political organization in Central Province, was clamouring for higher education, land reform and the preservation of cultural identity in the wake of tribal disorganization due to foreign ideology. The demand for education was made a springboard of the rise of nationalism. To ensure the quality of education, it was inevitable for Africans to request control of the medium of education. The missionaries stressed that they had a superior education which they sought to impart in their own way. This reply was rejected by the people (through Kikuyu Central Association) as presumptuous, thereby precipitating a clash of cultures.¹

It is against this general background that the female circumcision controversy should be viewed.

With a few exceptions, missionaries made little attempt to understand the significance of Africans customs. An onslaught was made on

¹R. Macpherson, The Presbyterian Church in Kenya (Nairobi: 1970), p. 109.

female circumcision on moral and medical grounds. The missionaries did not understand that the circumcision rite held such a central place in the tribal social texture. They failed to see that it was one of the tenets that held the society together. To remove it threatened tribal social disorganization and political anarchy. In the end it boiled down to not only a social but also a political issue which was linked up with the land issue. This is what is dealt with under the general theme of cultural nationalism.

FEMALE INITIATION CONTROVERSY (1929-1932)

Female circumcision, commonly known as clitoridectomy, was a custom that existed within the Meru, Embu and Kikuyu tribes.² Virtually all the girls in the Kikuyu and Meru tribes were circumcised at puberty as a rite of graduating from childhood to womanhood.³ The custom must be viewed against the protestant missionaries' general outlook on African customs and traditions. Protestant, evangelical missionaries saw nothing good in African customs, including circumcision and initiation ceremonies. They abhorred them as heathen, immoral and incompatible with Christian morality.⁴

²There were other tribes in Kenya that practiced female circumcision but for the purpose of this chapter, we shall concentrate on Kikuyu and Meru.

³Interview with Bertha M'Inoti, December 21, 1974; cf. J. Temu, British Protestant Missions (London: Longmans, 1972), p. 155.

⁴Ibid.

It seems that as far back as 1906, the Church of Scotland in Kikuyu was perturbed by the issue on medical grounds. The practice seemed less severe in Meru and Kiambu than in Nyeri. According to the doctors living in Tumutumu where a more severe version of the operation existed, the operation was condemned because:

It involves the removal of not only the clitoris, but also the labia minora and half the labia majora, together with the surrounding tissue, resulting in the permanent mutilation affecting the woman's natural functions.⁵

Even though a concerted effort was made to educate the young Christians on the evils of initiation rites, it was not possible to lay down any rules to regulate the practice. In 1915 the advisability of prohibiting the practice was discussed, but then the decision was postponed pending further consultations.⁶ In 1916 it was decided that female circumcision within the Church be forbidden, a decision that was reiterated at Tumutumu in 1920.⁷ A meeting was called in 1922 of the Alliance of Protestant Missions where a resolution was passed emphasizing the necessity for missionaries to use their influence to discourage or even abolish the practice.⁸ Later the Kikuyu Central Association castigated the missionaries for attempting to destroy the very fabric of the Kikuyu tribe. They accused the missionaries of

⁵A. J. Hopkins, "Female circumcision", a paper written for staff consultation, July 1940, p. 1, Methodist Archives, Nairobi in File entitled "Minutes of staff meetings and other papers 1934 to 1950."

⁶Macpherson, p. 107.

⁷Hopkins, p. 2.

⁸Ibid., p. 2.

trying to disintegrate Kikuyu society.⁹ Following this accusation, the All Kikuyu Native Conference of 1929 at Kambui is reported to have made the following resolution:

The elders regret the accusations made throughout the country that it is only the Europeans who want this custom removed and not the Kikuyu. As Kikuyu people they desire to record in these minutes, that the decision is their own freewill, and not a matter of compulsion by the Europeans.¹⁰

Methodists were, on the whole, guided by the Kambui Conference when the Missionary Committee in Kenya passed the following resolution on February 12, 1930:

Resolved that in common with the other Allied Missions, we declare our attitude towards this degrading and barbarous custom to be one of uncompromising opposition, that the promise to take no part in it be made part of catechumenal and baptismal vows at Meru, and that we require all our Church members to fall in with this law, breaches of which will be disciplined.¹¹

This stand was taken when Worthington was the General Superintendent of the District. It had serious repercussions, since many Africans could not see that circumcision was anti-Christian.¹² Christians were asked to take vows not to practice female circumcision or else face ex-communication. Many were not ready to go all the way, and as a result the Church in Meru was reduced to a membership of six

⁹Macpherson, p. 103. The Kikuyu Central Association was a political party, operating in Kikuyuland but speaking against colonial subjugation of all Africans in Kenya.

¹⁰Hopkins.

¹¹Ibid., p. 3.

¹²Interview with Kornelio Mukiira, December 19, 1974.

out of the former membership of seventy: Philip M'Inoti, Stefano M'Ndegwa, Cornelio M'Mukiira (all candidates for the Ministry), Elijah M'Ikiira, Andrew M'Mwereria and Benjamin M'Anampiu.¹³ This issue became more serious than had been anticipated. Worthington was not prepared to see the Church in which he had spent the best years of his life wrecked by a controversy which he little understood. The ruling was quickly relaxed by turning a blind eye to the offender.¹⁴

The sheer fact that the regulation was left unchanged (at least as a dead letter) was an indication that the missionaries hoped that the time would come when it could be successfully enforced.¹⁵

In 1936, after a cooling-off period, Mr. Hopkins tried in a more rational manner to look afresh at the whole question. He produced a document that was accepted by the Quarterly Meeting as a useful guide to the whole problem. His argument was:

Eliminating the argument from permanent physical injury, the approach to the question must be from the stand point of the absolute equality of boys and girls. We cannot take up an attitude which permits a time-honoured tribal custom in the case of boys, and forbids it in the case of girls. It is a dangerous misunderstanding of the significance of the custom, that Europeans should allow their natural repugnance to the ugly features of this rite to mislead them into the view that a campaign for its abolition is to be regarded as rescuing African girls from an indignity to which they reluctantly submit. Nothing is further from the truth. It is the simple fact that, girls in Meru look to this rite as a dignity which gives

¹³Hopkins, p. 3. At Chogoria (Presbyterian) Church attendance dropped in half and only 21 (including 13 teachers) attended school. At Kigari (a Church Missionary Society station) the missionary-in-charge wisely asked that the female circumcision be left out of the discussion.

¹⁴Interview with Isaaka M'Ithiri on December 19, 1974.

¹⁵Interview with Jusufu Ntimbu on December 18, 1974.

them a standing in the tribe, which otherwise they would not possess.¹⁶

It should be remembered that even though Worthington was the first to take a serious step towards the eradication of the practice, he was not convinced that time was ripe for such a drastic move to be taken. He questioned the wisdom of European missionaries to lay down regulations under which Africans could become members of the Church of Christ when he said:

The function of the Church is not to impose upon any community a set of regulations, but to introduce men and women of every race to the perfect life, helping them as it may mean for them, but realizing that only from within can come growth in Christlikeness, and recognition that no set pattern of Christlikeness can be on Africans and Europeans alike.¹⁷

Kornelio Mukiira remembers vividly the words of Worthington during the stormy meeting. According to Kornelio, Worthington said, "My children, if you must go away, remember that the doors of Christ's Church are wide open for you to come back."

Mr. Laughton, who was the principal of a Government Teachers' College, a lay missionary and an Oxford-trained anthropologist, looked at it differently. He felt that the issue was given prominence it did not deserve.¹⁸ He was particularly distressed to find some missionaries equating "indigenous custom", with "works of darkness" and "deeds of

¹⁶Hopkins, p. 4.

¹⁷Temu, p. 157.

¹⁸W. H. Laughton, "Initiation of Girls"--A reply to some statements in Hopkins' memorandum of even date in "Laughton Private Letters" 24th July, 1940, p. 2.

ignorance". He felt that the whole issue was clouded with emotional overtones.¹⁹ He felt that Christianity ought to permeate "tribal life as leaven in the lump, not shattering it as with an explosive." Mr. Laughton concludes his argument by saying:

I have still to be convinced that this custom is a flagrant example of wanton lust and gratuitous cruelty. Parents of even "Primitive" people cannot be charged with such an attitude towards their children. I have no doubt that the missionary who described the revolting nature of the second operation could equally well describe the equally obnoxious atmosphere of a Meru meat feast, the lively nature of the interior of a Meru hut--especially at night--the disgusting sanitary arrangements of the average village, and a score of other things which make our sensitive minds shudder. Why must we be so ethnocentric?²⁰

A further development of the issue was taken in 1937 when "Enquirers" on their entry to the "Catechumen" status were required to make this additional vow:

And further, I am fully aware that the whole Christian Church in this country is persuaded that the circumcision of girls is a custom not permissible for followers of Christ. For this reason I myself pledge with all my power to separate myself from this matter and further, when I am baptized and become an acknowledged Christian, I will never agree that this rite be practiced upon any of my own children.²¹

It is difficult now to uncover all the reasons that made missionaries raise hue and cry over the circumcision issue, though some missionaries believed it to be a moral issue. Apart from the feeling

¹⁹Ibid., p. 3.

²⁰Ibid., p. 4. Mr. Laughton felt that the issue of circumcision did not warrant all the fuss that the Church made about it. He felt that there were more serious evils that the Church could give its energies to combatting. He regretted the attitude to circumcision being made a test of Christianity. ("Female Circumcision," Laughton papers, p. 1.)

²¹Hopkins, p. 4.

that the operation was useless from the standpoint of a European, and probably physically harmful, one can infer that missionaries felt that new converts ought to give up old customs that would put them in the same camp with the "heathens."²² According to the missionaries the custom was associated with the excitement of sexual activity as an end in itself. It was felt that dances that went with the rite had psychological implications for the initiate.²³ The whole debate was painted with emotional and picturesque description of the courageous attitude which the Church ought to take to prevent Christian girls being hurled back into the old customs.²⁴ Mr. Laughton understood the European reaction to be tainted with ignorance of the African customs. It was a demonstration of their spiritual arrogance, an attempt to protect Africans from their own customs and practices. He thought that it was a major blunder for the church (especially the missionaries) to lay down regulations on any single African custom, especially severing it from its context in the tribal texture.

Mrs. Bertha M'Inoti, wife of the Rev. Philip M'Inoti, agreed with Laughton that the whole issue was clouded and probably confused

²²Interview with Samson M'Mutiga, December 19, 1974.

²³Interview with W. H. Laughton, on November 3, 1978. Mr. Laughton felt that the attitude taken by the Church was absolutely negative and lacked coherence.

²⁴Ibid. It was Laughton's view that even within the apparently enlightened small minority of the Africans, their enlightenment would not have taken the form of opposition to this custom had the idea not been put before them by external agencies.

by political overtones.²⁵ Certainly the influence of the Kikuyu Central Association was also felt in the Meru area. Dr. Arthur, a Presbyterian missionary who represented African interests in legislative council, for example, had campaigned to get the government to legislate against circumcision. He tried in 1926 to persuade the Roman Catholics to cooperate with the Kenya Missionary Alliance in persuading the governor to take the necessary action against indecent customs.²⁶ The government, however, was of the opinion that suppression of the native customs was not the best way to deal with the already politically-injected crisis. The government felt that the best way to deal with so ancient and important a custom was through education and not legislation.²⁷ The government felt that even if such legislation were enacted, the execution of it would be difficult if not impossible and would unite the natives against the government.²⁸ In the end the government advised the missionaries to try to change African attitudes on circumcision through education.²⁹

Methodists took this injunction probably more seriously than other societies and as a result adopted an attitude of toleration

²⁵ Interview with Bertha M'Inoti, on December 21, 1974. She remembered having been ridiculed through "Muthirigu" dances, because she and her husband had accepted the Church's regulation against female circumcision.

²⁶ Temu, p. 156.

²⁷ "Female Circumcision", Circular No. 36 of the Native Affairs Department, KBU/32 Kenya National Archives.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

rather than confrontation beginning from 1930.³⁰ There was increasingly a feeling that it was not the function of the Church to enact moral regulations, but to inform individuals in a community and help them view their customs and practices in the light of Christian ethics.³¹

There was a feeling among those who were engaged in girls' education that the custom of female circumcision had a dulling effect on the minds of the young scholars.³² This was rather associated with puberty problems, especially when puberty was contemporaneous with circumcision. One could not hope to get very far when circumcised girls (Ngutu) were made to sit and learn together with the uncircumcised ones (Nkenye).³³ Younger and older girls could not be taught separately because enough teachers could not be secured. The few who were available had other responsibilities with out-schools.

While later missionaries felt that to enforce the circumcision law was a kind of reductio ad absurdum, they were not prepared to reverse the decision earlier taken.³⁴ It was safer to put it in other words and read thus:

³⁰Interview with Laughton on November 3, 1978.

³¹Interview with Andrew Mwereria, March 11, 1974.

³²Interview with Bertha Jones on November 10, 1978.

³³Ibid.

³⁴A. J. Hopkins, "Girls' Circumcision", March 21, 1941, p. 2. in the file marked "Hopkins' papers", Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

It is the aim of the Christian Mission in Meru to open wide the door of opportunity in the New Life to every girl and boy, and to see that no obstacles are deliberately placed in the way of any who desire fully to develop personality and to take advantage of the new educational and economic opportunities.³⁵

Most people agreed that there existed an idiotic distinction between boys and girls concerning this issue.³⁶ No one could offer a conclusive argument as to why boys' circumcision was allowed while the female circumcision had to be discontinued. Whether this was a manifestation of sex discrimination is hard to tell. One thing is clear, no one wanted to have more trouble by suggesting that boys' circumcision should be put in the same category as girls' circumcision.³⁷

The widely held view arising from missionary records that African Christians sanctioned the passing of the laws against female circumcision is seriously challenged by Africans.³⁸ African Christians who were interviewed reiterated that it was an injunction from the missionaries which Africans were asked to accept and observe. African meetings were used as a rubber-stamp for the decisions made by missionary conferences.³⁹ The same judgment is applied to the decision of the Local Native Councils who enacted some regulations under pressure from the District Commissioners.⁴⁰ Jusufu M'Ntimbu, Methodist Minister,

³⁵Ibid., p. 3.

³⁶Ibid., p. 4.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Interview with Ezekiel Rukaaria, December 19, 1974.

³⁹Interview with Jusufu M'Ntimbu, December 18, 1974. Samson M'Mutiga and Isaaka M'Ithiri made the same observation.

⁴⁰Interview with Isaaka M'Ithiri on December 19, 1974.

concedes that those Africans who signed the cards to show their acceptance of the law actually had their daughters circumcised secretly.

Africans interpreted the conflict to be political and nationalistic. To give up circumcision was tantamount to admitting defeat by foreign forces. Tribal unity and integrity depended on the continuation of the socially approved customs without which the very fabric that held the society together would be severed once and for all. The Methodists averted a crisis by their compromising attitude.⁴¹ Those who were not so tactful, like the Church of Scotland at Chogoria, Tumutumu and Kikuyu, had a devastating crisis on their hands.⁴² There the Church made the unpalatable decision of condemning the only African political party that existed at the time.⁴³ This type of behaviour was unfortunate as it brought unnecessary misunderstanding between the Church and the local people. From there onwards there emerged some organized groups that stood in opposition to missionary activities. This was the result of the repressive attitudes adopted by missionaries towards African social customs.⁴⁴

The crisis of 1930 fomented by the female circumcision controversy had far-reaching consequences in relation to the growth of the

⁴¹Interview with Kornelio Mukiira, December 19, 1974.

⁴²Macpherson, p. 112.

⁴³Ibid., p. 113. Macpherson is of the opinion that some people were convinced that some missionaries together with a handful of African converts were working for the interest of the Colonial Government.

⁴⁴Ibid. Missionaries seem to have been surprised by the speed and opposition with which the crisis developed.

Church. It raised fundamental questions in the minds of the new converts. Did the Church have any authority to condemn practices that were tolerated by the community? Was there any justification in scripture and in the traditions of the Church for such an act?⁴⁵ Even more repugnant was the idea that a small minority should endeavour to impose its will upon the majority of the people, contrary to democratic principles.⁴⁶ It left an open sore among the members of the Church as a result of the sheer presumption on part of a few individuals to insist on a regulation which did not arise from any public opinion within the Church, nor from any sense of moral obligation on the part of the members. The Church, however, came through this crisis having learned one important thing: the Church is made up of individuals of various backgrounds and must find room for many differing opinions.⁴⁷

THE CHURCH AND THE KIAMA

The Meru community was made up of hierarchical councils that were responsible for the general administration of Society. While the supreme decisions were taken by the elders (Akuru), an age-group system was devised in order to ensure that justice was done to every member in the tribe.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Interview with Samson M'Mutiga, December 19, 1974.

⁴⁶Hopkins, "Girls Circumcision", March 21, 1941, Hopkins papers, p. 1.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 2.

⁴⁸Interview with Hezekiel M'Mukiri, March 1, 1975.

TABLE 3

A TABLE SHOWING CHURCH MEMBERSHIP OF THE UNITED
METHODIST MISSION - 1928

CIRCUITS	MISSION- ARIES	CHURCHES	AFRICAN PASTORS & TEACHERS	ADULT MEMBERS	JUNIOR MEMBERS	TOTAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY
MAZERA	1	9	11	351	115	466
RIBE	1	2	11	158	9	167
TANA	-	2	3	202	-	202
MERU	3	1	13	70	3	73
TOTALS	5	14	38	781	127	908

EUROPEANS

J.B. Griffiths - General Superintendent
A.G.W. Cozens - Minister
R.T. Worthington - Minister
A.J. Hopkins - Minister
H. Clay - In charge of industrial mission.

AFRICANS - MAZERA

William Kombo - Evangelist
Albert Mnyika - Evangelist
Luke Mgandi - Evangelist
Albert Mlawa - Teacher
Alfred Rugia - Teacher
Christopher Kazungu - Teacher
Thomas Wakefield - Teacher
John Nyae - Teacher
Timothy Karungu - Teacher

MERU

Daudi M'Ituma - Teacher
Samson M'Mutiga - Teacher
Isaka M'Muga - Teacher
Andrea M'Mwereria - Teacher
Benjamin M'Anampiu - Teacher
Benjamin Kiruja - Teacher

RIBE

William Ambale - Minister
Edward Gona - Evangelist
Noah Mbaraka - Evangelist
Johnson Mzungu - Evangelist
John Lue - Teacher
Zakaria Athman - Teacher
John Mgalle - Teacher

TANA

Joseph Jara - Minister

SOURCE: Statistical Returns, 1923-1933, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.
1928 is the only year with full data.

The first of the oaths taken by a boy (aged between 13 and 14) was "gatuuri". This was an oath administered by the peers to ensure good behaviour in the future.⁴⁹ The second oath was taken at the time of circumcision and was called "Kiama kia Ramare". This was to ensure that young men were loyal enough to be given the important responsibility of defending and watching over the tribal land as well as protecting territorial boundaries.⁵⁰ Although all men passed through the two oaths, there was a third one which was given to a select few who were considered to be custodians of tribal secrets. This group was "Njuri ya Kiama," or as commonly called "Njuri Ncheke", and acted more like the cabinet.⁵¹ People with strong personality were elected to the Njuri and formed the backbone of the tribal administrative machinery.

Members of the Njuri were selected for their ability and integrity. There were representatives from each age-grade on it and each geographical area, to ensure wide representation.⁵² The Njuri was responsible for deciding on such important matters as the regulation concerning dowries, fixing of clan boundaries, cementing of strained relationships between different sub-tribes and laying down general regulations concerning behaviour and courtesy.⁵³

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 2.

⁵¹There was a parliamentary assembly known as "Kiama gia Nkomango" to which there was a wider representation. Only men of integrity and proved honesty would be selected into "Njuri Ncheke".

⁵²Interview with Ex-Chief Naaman M'Mwirichia, March 23, 1979.

⁵³Ibid.

Those were fortunate enough to be selected candidates for membership in the Njuri had to go through certain initiation ceremonies which were religious in nature and which were administered to each initiate in the presence of the "Njuri".⁵⁴ The chief feature of the oath was the vow taken by a new initiate promising to carry out the duties of a Munjuri faithfully.⁵⁵ Traditionally, this vow was to be taken through the sacrificial goat, administered by a revered or dignified elder.

Unfortunately, such a rite was considered repugnant to Christian ideas and was condemned in Christian circles by both African and European Christians.⁵⁶ It was felt, however, that since Christians could not sever themselves from tribal affiliation without serious consequences, and since they could not be elected to hold any responsible position in the tribe without being first initiated into Njuri, a way had to be found to circumvent the problem.⁵⁷ The District Commissioner himself saw the need for all Churches to come to terms with this important Meru custom and felt that if Churches did not take a conciliatory position the result would be:

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵District Commissioner, Meru to Church Leaders, 5th September 1938. (MBU/L) 17/1280 National Archives, Nairobi. Mr. Lambert, the District Commissioner, was an anthropologist who had keen interest in the traditions of the indigenous peoples. He had made extensive studies of Meru and Kikuyu.

⁵⁶Interview with Hezekiah M'Mukiri, March 1, 1975.

⁵⁷Interview with Naaman M'Mwiricia, March 23, 1979.

A cleavage between the Christians and the bulk of the tribe, which is clearly detrimental to the welfare of the whole as it is to the present young men, who are being trained at the missions, that the tribe must look to its future leaders, but yet the latter will not be acceptable if they despised and disregarded the old tribal form of Government.⁵⁸

Given his responsibility to hold the district together and to promote its social welfare, the District Commissioner took the initiative and called a district meeting of over one thousand Wanjuri representing all parts of the district. The meeting was held on 24th August 1938 and through the District Commissioner's instigation resolved that:

In future any Christian, selected and willing to serve on the Njuri, would be allowed to take the oath on the Bible, the oath being administered by elders of the candidate's Church in the presence of the Njuri.⁵⁹

After proper consultations, the Methodist Church felt constrained to participate in the tribal leadership, while at the same time being cautious of the danger of compromising with the "pagan" rites.⁶⁰ The Methodists listed the following points as being incompatible with their belief as Christians:

1. To take part in any ceremony which is associated with "Knoma" (spirits) or which has for its purpose the appeasement of, or makes petition to, any spirits.

⁵⁸District Commissioner, Meru to Church Leaders, September 5, 1938, National Archives, Nairobi.

⁵⁹Ibid. Also interview with Naaman M'Mwiricia, March 23, 1979. Naaman remembers instances where he himself administered the oath to other Christians.

⁶⁰Philip M'Inoti, "That which does not harmonize between Christianity, the 'Kiama' and its Oaths", August 1938, mimeographed notes on the file marked 'Minutes of Staff Meetings 1934-1950', Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

2. To take any oath which may compel one at some time to commit ceremonial adultery, or violate any moral law laid down by the Church.
3. To associate oneself with any custom which prevents one to aid another person in trouble.⁶¹

Philip M'Inoti, with encouragement from the District Commissioner, was instrumental in guiding Christians to see that they could participate in tribal rites, while at the same time being good Christians. While he did not subscribe to the traditional forms of entering Njuri, he urged his fellow Christians to maintain the historical continuity with tribal ancestors through Njuri.⁶² Christians were, therefore, allowed to enter Njuri on swearing upon the Bible using the words:

I solemnly declare before the council of the Meru tribe this day that I will fulfil every responsibility that is mine in conserving the interests of the community to which I belong. I will do my utmost to maintain the unity of the tribe by respecting every custom which ministers to the wellbeing of my people.⁶³

Christians were given the concession to enter Njuri without necessarily having to pass through the ordeal of the other two stages mentioned earlier. That the missionaries allowed African Christians to join the Njuri was remarkable. Apart from encouraging Christians to take part in the development of their communities, it demonstrates that Methodist missionaries believed that those customs that were essentially African and worthy of survival should be built into the fabric of the

⁶¹Ibid. The last point is in reference to superstition and fear of taboo and contamination.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Interview with Hezekiah M'Mukiri, March 1, 1975.

African Church.⁶⁴ Hopkins particularly felt that missionaries should resist the temptation to develop the African Church after the pattern of Western civilization and its emphasis on individualism.⁶⁵ Communalism that was stressed by the Njuri or Kiama⁶⁶ depicted the reality of African society. In African tribal life, the individual was not lost in a mass, but was a part of a living group, where each member had a definite place, operating on specified guidelines of duties and rights.⁶⁷ The tribal life and its institutions (like the Njuri) incorporated all regulations on decent and indecent behaviour, conceptions of morality and religious precepts.⁶⁸

After the tribal council allowed Christians to enter Njuri, a controversy within the Church was reactivated.⁶⁹ Some of the younger Christians perceived the inconsistency of the Church which at one time hurled them away from their tribal customs only to pull them back later.⁷⁰ They rightly felt a sense of betrayal by their leaders and openly demonstrated their resentment.⁷¹ Some congregations (like Ntakira) refused to accept Holy Communion from Philip M'Inoti because he compromised with "devilish" custom. There were also non-Christians who

⁶⁴A. J. Hopkins, Trail Blazers and Road Makers (London: Hooks, n.d.), p. 144. There was a feeling that a sense of community life inherent in Africa societies ought to be preserved.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Interview with Hezekiah M'Mukiri, March 1, 1979.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Interview with Naaman M'Mwiricia, March 23, 1979.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

felt that Christians were allowed to enter Njuri through a kind of back-door and belittled the Christian initiation. Consequently, Christian members of the Njuri were nicknamed "Njuri ya Mauku" (Njuri of the Book).⁷² There were a few instances where African Christians were forcibly initiated into Njuri under the traditional rites. Since this was considered repulsive by the Church, the District Commissioner was asked to intervene in order to put a stop to this regression and to punish the culprits.⁷³ The District Commissioner called a conciliatory meeting of the parties involved because:

It is vitally important at the present time that there should be complete solidarity amongst the elders of the Meru tribe whether Christian or pagan, and I am confident that this can be achieved.⁷⁴

Even though the Njuri was a controversial issue, all missions that operated in Meru, Roman Catholic, Methodist and Presbyterian, co-operated with the elders to unite the tribe under one form of leadership.⁷⁵ Christian Churches realized that by joining the Kiama the highest good of the tribe would be secured, and that they would

⁷²Ibid. The British administration was keen to see that the tribe was united under Njuri. They went as far as punishing those who ridiculed the Christian Njuri.

⁷³District Commissioner, Meru to Church leaders, 30th September 1952, MBU/ADM/15/166, National Archives, Nairobi.

⁷⁴Ibid. The letter was addressed to Rev. F. W. Valender of M.M.S., Rev. Fr. G. Maletto of CCM, Miss R. Allan of C.S.M. and Mr. W. H. Laughton, the Principal of a Government Teachers' College.

⁷⁵Interview with Naaman M'Mwiricia, March 23, 1979.

contribute towards maintaining tribal strength and solidarity.⁷⁶ Non-participation was identified as being both bad nationalism and bad Christianity.⁷⁷ In the end the Church benefited by having its prominent Christians in the fore-front of tribal leadership.⁷⁸

AFRICAN CULTURE VERSUS WESTERN CHRISTIAN CULTURE

From the very beginning of the missionary impact, African culture began to collide with western culture. The missionaries demanded that their converts should change their beliefs, customs, traditions and dress in order to unquestionably accept a new way of life and social code. This new morality was presumably called Christian as opposed to the traditional way of life. What was demanded was nothing short of revolution. African converts were being asked to reject "those very things that bound the tribe together, from kings and chiefs down to the lowest and most insignificant individual, (becoming) one organic whole controlled by an iron-bound code of duties."⁷⁹

The clash between the two cultures could not be avoided, as we saw in the case of female circumcision. This was also the case with regard to polygamy, something that a Victorian-Edwardian missionary

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Interview with Ezekiel Rukaaria, December 19, 1974.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Jomo Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya (London: Secker & Warburg, 1938), p. 271.

could not comprehend.⁸⁰ Even though polygamy was ingrained in the social fabric of the African societies and bestowed great social and economic advantages, the missionaries condemned it outright.⁸¹ As Kenyatta points out, it was inevitable to have big families because: "It was necessary to have a number of female children who would also render assistance by cultivating the land and looking after the general welfare of the tribe, while the men were fighting to defend their homesteads."⁸²

The Western Christian moral stand on monogamy was based on the fact that:

The verdict of history would appear to be that all that is best in civilization has been achieved by those sections of the human race which have outlived polygamy and have established monogamous family life as the foundation of their society.⁸³

It was the view of the Methodist mission that monogamy was not only practicable but absolutely essential to the African society. It expressed its conviction that, "monogamy must be insisted upon in our members, and we cannot depart from that regulation."⁸⁴ In 1940 and subsequent years, the mission was alarmed by the increase in the number of those attached strongly to the Christian community who reverted to

⁸⁰ Temu, p. 108.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Kenyatta, p. 175.

⁸³ Hopkins to the District Commissioner, Meru, November 7, 1940, in the file marked "General Correspondence, 1940-1950", Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

⁸⁴ Ibid. Also Minutes of Conference (Kisokwe), August 21 and 22, 1890, CMS Central Committee, G3/A5/P3, CMS Archives, London.

polygamy. Mr. Hopkins saw this as a disturbing element, since it spelled out a spirit of regression.⁸⁵ Reasons for this type of behaviour were identified as the rise of "individualism with concomitant acquisitiveness" and the British administration insisting on the earlier circumcision of girls, with the consequence of early marriages.⁸⁶ In the opinion of Mr. Hopkins:

The exigencies of the new economics, and the introduction of long educational training for professions, has tended to raise the marriage age for young men. But the community has been flooded with girls who have been circumcised at a younger age, and for whom no place exists in the community except as married women. The pressure of parents to get these girls married because there was nothing else to do with them, is more responsible than any other factor, for the increase of polygamy among those attached to the Christian community.⁸⁷

What Hopkins failed to recognize was that polygamy was an intrinsic part of the African society and could not be wiped out so easily by a seemingly thin layer of Christian regulations against it.⁸⁸ To the African, polygamy was natural since it procured social status. Only important men became polygamous, hence, they were considered morally upright.⁸⁹ First wives encouraged their husbands to marry more wives when the need arose.

⁸⁵Hopkins to District Commissioner, Meru.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Interview with Hezekiah M'Mukiri, March 1, 1979.

⁸⁹Ibid. Cf. John S. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy (London: Heinemann, 1969), p. 142.

The fact that young girls left school just after circumcision in order to get married cannot, in the view of African Christians, be attributed to the institution of polygamy. It was regrettable that young girls failed to take advantage of further learning at the most formative period of their lives.⁹⁰ But this in itself does not indicate that polygamy was incompatible with Christian morality. According to the Methodist law, a man who was a polygamist before conversion, unless he gave up extra wives, could only be baptized but could not be received at the Lord's Table, while a woman married to a polygamist received all privileges pertaining to Church membership. This was an apparent double-standard. A woman was seen as a passive participant to the marriage contract. According to the African customs a woman had as much right in marriage as her husband.

Another source of misunderstanding was in connection with the burial rites. Since Ameru did not bury their dead, there were taboos that were connected with the handling of a corpse.⁹¹ To touch a corpse or even visit a graveyard were acts that caused ceremonial uncleanness, hence it was important to have the one who incurred defilement to undergo a ceremonial cleansing rite.⁹² The natural way of disposing of a dead body was to throw it into the bush to be devoured by hyenas.⁹³

⁹⁰Interview with Kornelio Mukiira, February 4, 1979.

⁹¹Hopkins, Trail Blazers, p. 109.

⁹²Interview with Kornelio Muikiira, December 19, 1974.

⁹³*Ibid.*

Hyenas were scavengers and were considered to be God's messengers who received the dead person into the abode of ancestors (the living dead).

It was with great consternation that the non-Christian community learned about the first Christian burial in 1919 when Daudi M'Ituma's infant twins died.⁹⁴ This custom continued to be a source of irritation and misunderstanding for a long time in Meru. Christians who were known to have participated in burial rites were either ostracized or ridiculed in songs.⁹⁵ Such a person would not be greeted nor visited by his or her peers. He or she would be severed from all social activities. Such deep-rooted antipathies and prejudices continued up until 1935 when, through pressure from administrative authorities, it became fashionable to bury the dead.⁹⁶

In many instances, Africans felt that the missionaries did not understand fully the implication of changing the religious outlook of the community. In African customary marriage, for example, missionaries failed to understand how some religious acts ingrained in such traditions as dancing and beer drinking contributed to the religious ethos of the ceremony. It became a hard-and-fast rule in the Methodist mission that it was absolutely essential to abstain from traditional dances in order to be accepted as a candidate for baptism.⁹⁷

⁹⁴Interview with Samson M'Mutiga, December 18, 1974.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Interview with Kornelio Mukiira, December 19, 1974.

⁹⁷Interview with Samson M'Mutiga, March 1, 1979.

An African convert felt uprooted from tribal life and driven screaming into the world of the unknown, ill-prepared to meet the demands and challenges of the new faith.⁹⁸ It was difficult for the new convert to understand the reason "why a man should be required to put away the mothers of his children in utter disregard of their human rights, in order to be accepted for Christian baptism, while a blatant racist . . . is welcomed every Sunday morning to the Communion Table."⁹⁹

It should not be assumed that the missionaries were the only culprits in this cultural misrepresentation. Okot p'Bitek accuses the nineteenth-century anthropologists of engaging in a task that was designed to "demonstrate the superiority of Western culture over those of the colonized peoples."¹⁰⁰

At first missionaries tried to shield their converts from bad influences which they thought were communicated by cultural dances and social gatherings such as harvest festivals, circumcision ceremonies, marriage ceremonies and naming ceremonies.¹⁰¹ By so doing they thought

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Burgess Carr, "Opening Address by the General Secretary", the Third Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches, Lusaka, 1974.

¹⁰⁰Okot p'Bitek, African Religions in Western Scholarships (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1970), p. 104. African Christian theologians who are influenced by Western training, only to express themselves in Western thoughtforms, are castigated by p'Bitek.

¹⁰¹Interview with Naaman M'Mwiricia, March 14, 1979.

they were doing African Christians a favour by protecting them from their own customs.

With a few exceptions, the early missionaries did not make much effort to understand African customs. Their intention was to let African customs wither away slowly but surely. There were some beliefs and customs, such as traditional sacrificial systems and reverence to ancestral spirits, that were not actively fought, as was the case with female circumcision rites, but were allowed to die a natural death.¹⁰² Others like polygamy and drinking were fought tooth and nail, thus intensifying the protracted warfare between African and Western cultures.¹⁰³ The school system hastened to obliterate African customs, and the next chapter will show how education was used to teach young students to despise their culture in contrast to the Western Christian culture which was supposedly superior to their own. Because of the influence wrought by education, such customs as tribal markings on the body and ear-piercing passed out of popular use, and by 1950 such practices had already been forgotten.¹⁰⁴

Pressure was brought to bear on the newly converted Africans to leave the traditions of their ancestors and adhere to the new life that Christianity engendered.¹⁰⁵ This method of evangelism produced

¹⁰²Macpherson, p. 105.

¹⁰³Interview with Kornelio Mukiira, March 1, 1979.

¹⁰⁴Ibid. Meru women used to have a pattern of markings on their lower abdomen (Nkuuro), usually done just before initiation.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

African Christians who were schooled and modelled in western culture, who even intended to outstrip Europeans in aping the latter's customs to the letter. It is common to see pictures of the early converts wearing Victorian dresses and even using helmets to shield themselves from the tropical sun. They considered it an insult if they were asked to retain their traditional dress. Another outward mark of Christian adherence was the building of rectangular houses instead of the traditional round ones. To the eyes of the outsider, this indiscriminate attitude reduced the African Christian to a robot-like behaviour. If he wanted to remain a Christian, he had no choice but to emulate missionaries' practices.

Chapter VII

METHODS AND CONTEXT OF EVANGELIZATION

EDUCATION

From the very beginning missions established schools for educating their converts. It was realized that education played an important role in the process of evangelization. Missions undertook the education of their converts because it was necessary for them to read the Bible, learn catechism, and intelligibly understand the content of Christian religion.

Missions in Africa were influenced by the Le Zoute Conference in formulating their education policy.¹ Under the preamble the Conference stated:

The true friends of Africa wish that the Africans should remain Africans, maintaining a proper pride in their own heritage.²

The Conference tried to spell out the intention of the missions' involvement in education to the Africans. According to the report of the Conference, sound education involved:

Character development based on religion . . . colouring every educational activity. Hygiene and health should be emphasized, not only in the practice of the school and home, but in the reading, writing and arithmetic of the school. Agriculture and

¹A study on World Missions based on the work of the International Conference at Le Zoute, Belgium from September 14th-21st, 1926, under the auspices of the International Missionary Council.

²"The Christian Mission in Africa", International Missionary Council (1926), 32.

industry should be taught in classroom and field and workshop. The building up of a sound home life and the value of recreation should be taught both by precept and practice.³

Perhaps we should pause here to ask ourselves what was involved in traditional African education. We shall then be able to see how the missionaries adhered to or deviated from the traditional pattern.

In African societies, the process of education was not only informal but utilitarian and unconscious. It consisted in handing down to successive generations the arts, folklore, myths and traditions of the community.⁴ The younger generations had to be taught what held the community together so that they in turn would pass it on to another generation.⁵

The method used in teaching was of a practical nature and included initiation into the mysteries of the community of which the initiate was a member.⁶ During initiation ceremonies and afterwards, senior members of the community took it upon themselves to inculcate the moral values of the society, encouraging the initiates to ask questions on what they did not understand. This teaching went on until marriage, when people were considered to be responsible members of the society.⁷

³Ibid.

⁴W. H. Laughton, "Concerning the Building of the New School at Meru, East Africa," Missionary Echo of United Methodist Church (June 1931), 223.

⁵Interview with Kornello Mukiira, March 1, 1979.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Interview with Hezekiah M'Mukiri, March 1, 1975.

When missionaries introduced formal education, it was understood by the community, to supplement the traditional informal education.⁸ Children were allowed by their parents to go to school and learn new ideas in order to continue being better members of their community, holding fast to the customs and wisdom of their forefathers.⁹ It was with dismay and utter confusion that the elders discovered that their children were led to disregard and even despise tribal instructions and customs.¹⁰

By requiring enquirers and students to reside on the mission ground, the missionaries further alienated their students from the community and made them strangers in their own land.¹¹ Referring to this alienation and expressing his concern about it, the governor of Kenya, Sir Edward Grigg, in 1926 said, "We are dealing in these territories with what is perhaps the hardest political, economic and moral problem now confronting the civilized governments of the world."¹²

Traditional education underwent a decline because the values upon which it was founded had undergone intricate changes. African civilization which was founded on communalism had been superseded by European civilization, with an inveterate desire for individual

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Interview with Naaman M'Mwirichia, March 23, 1979.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Conference of East African Governors, Nairobi, 1926, National Archives, Nairobi, p. 23.

achievement, especially in the field of education.¹³ Western education was identified with economic values and the improvement of the standards of living, with progress and enlightenment. A literate person became identified as "civilized", "cultured" and even "Christian". This was inevitable since no one could become literate except through a mission school.¹⁴ To be on good terms with the mission, it was imperative that one become a Christian; hence, a "Christian" was synonymous with a "scholar" (Muthomi). People expressed their Church attendance as "going to read" (Kuthoma), hence a Muthomi (Reader) was a Christian.¹⁵

The first school in Kenya seems to have been founded by the CMS Mission at Rabai in 1847.¹⁶ Though at first the school did not seem to have much success, it nevertheless contributed to the raison d'etre of the mission. More importantly, the study of African languages by the missionaries helped a great deal in laying a firm foundation for the educational process.¹⁷ Krapf, New and Wakefield, to name just few, studied African languages, reducing them to written form.

The first school of the Methodist mission was started at Ribe

¹³Rosalind Mutua, Development of Education in Kenya (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1975), p. 11.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Interview with Hezekiah M'Mukiri, March 1, 1975.

¹⁶J. N. B. Osogo, "Educational Developments in Kenya 1911-1924", in B. A. Ogot (ed.) Hadith 3 (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1971), p. 103.

¹⁷Ibid.

around 1864 by New and Wakefield. Their ambition was to reach the children through formal education.¹⁸ A second school was started at Mazeras in 1894, and another one at Golbanti in 1896. At Ribe children were encouraged to attend school regularly by such provision as food and clothing. In return they provided free labour in the mission gardens.¹⁹ The first Methodist indigenous catechists like Shakala, Steven Kireri, Aba Shora and John Mgomba were all educated at Ribe. At Golbanti in 1924, for example, the average attendance was twenty-one.²⁰ Education was becoming more popular as time went on, and it was not mere exaggeration when Mr. Laughton said:

Thus, on any day in Africa you may see twenty, fifty, a hundred, or even more, little African boys sitting fearfully, perhaps a little restlessly, on uncomfortable rough pole seats gazing at the alphabetical mysteries of the man with the chalk.²¹

The first schools of both Catholic and Protestant missions were designed to produce readers and catechists.²² Those who were trained to read were sent to distant villages to propagate the

¹⁸Rosemary Nthamburi, "The impact of the Methodist Church on Kenya in the Nineteenth Century" (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Claremont Graduate School, 1978), p. 41.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰J. H. Duerden, "Spade Work on the Tana", Missionary Echo, (1906), 37.

²¹W. H. Laughton, "I want to read", Kingdom Overseas (1938), 172.

²²Roland Oliver, The Missionary Factor in East Africa (London: Longmans, 1952), p. 212.

gospel.²³ It was necessary for catechumens to know how to read and write. Their literature was portions of the gospels and other selected passages in the vernacular. The missions had an inherent desire to translate scriptures into the vernacular in very simple orthography, at the expense of a literary style, in order to form the basis for instructing their semi-literate converts.²⁴

At first the Methodists opened central schools in places like Mazeras, Ribe and Kaaga. These schools operated from a syllabus drawn by the missionary staff committee which recommended subjects to form the curriculum.²⁵ Reading, writing and arithmetic formed the backbone of the academic part of the education.²⁶ The technical part included woodwork, carpentry, handicraft, housecraft, and agriculture because of the belief that students ought to appreciate the value of manual work.²⁷

A firm foundation of the educational system was being laid slowly but surely. Out-schools, or as they were commonly called, "bush schools" started to emerge in different villages. In 1906 Mrs. Griffiths, a missionary's wife who resided at Mazeras and was

²³Interview with Naaman M'Mwrichia, March 23, 1979.

²⁴J. Temu, British Protestant Missions (London: Longmans, 1972), p. 142.

²⁵"Our Foreign Field", Missionary Echo (1896), 180.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Temu, p. 142.

responsible for the educational aspect of the mission at the coast, gave a rationale for the engagement of the mission in education when she said:

Therefore I am sure you will see how absolutely necessary and important it is to teach the children not only the Gospel truths but the art of reading, that they may read the scriptures themselves. To my mind, one of the chief reasons why many adult Christians become weak or lapsed when they go to live in outside villages is that they are unable to read, and being beyond the reach of services and teaching, they simply "drift".²⁸

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS OF EDUCATION IN KENYA

The aim of the first missionaries to Kenya was either to evangelize along the coast of Kenya or to reach Uganda. The result of this endeavour was a concentrated development along the coast and around the lake region (Nyanza) which up to the end of the century was part of Uganda.²⁹ During the years between 1895 and 1911, the foundations of education in Kenya were laid by mission central schools conducted by European staff and surrounded by a number of out-schools or bush schools. There was no government Education Department, since the government's attention was given to the pacification of various ethnic groups in the country with a view to establishing law and order.³⁰

²⁸J. B. Griffiths, "A letter from Mazeras", Missionary Echo (October 1906), 218.

²⁹"African Education in Kenya", Beecher Report, 1949, p. 1 (hereafter referred to as Beecher Report).

³⁰J. Anderson, The Struggle for the School (Nairobi: Longman, 1970), p. 2.

The curriculum put emphasis on practical work (woodwork and agriculture), and most schools offered boarding facilities whose expenses were met by pupils performing manual work around the mission station.³¹

Established in 1911, the government Education Department enabled the government to have a direct influence over educational policy and provide financial aid for the missions.³² This was seen by some to be an intrusion into the missions' domain. This sentiment was intensified when the government opened a technical school at Machakos in 1913 and another one at Waa in the Coast Province in 1924. In the same year the Native Industrial Training Depot was opened at Kabete, culminating in the establishment of the Jeanes School in 1925.³³

The struggle between missions and the government with regard to education was intensified by an article in the East African Standard that said:

The African is in his native country, and should be encouraged to become the main stay of the country, instead of being subservient to the Asiatic. The native must be improved, there is no question about that, but new methods must be adopted. To our minds the missions have failed in this particular, and the right line has been taken in the Machakos Industrial School where no religious instruction is given.³⁴

In 1924 the first education ordinance was passed by the Legislative Council in order to provide an advisory committee on

³¹ Temu, p. 143.

³² Beecher Report, p. 3. Also Education Department Annual Report, 1924.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ East African Standard (August 20, 1920).

African education.³⁵ Among other things it provided for the issue of certificates or licenses to teachers and proper supervision of schools.³⁶ It should be noted that the education ordinance of 1924 was a codification of the 1919 Education Commission which was, up to that time, being used on a voluntary basis.³⁷ The Kenya White Paper of 1923, which promulgated the doctrine of African paramountcy³⁸ wherever racial interests conflicted, contributed much in the development of educational policy and was particularly influential on the Ormsby-Gore Commission of 1924.³⁹ This commission recommended the use of the vernacular as a medium of instruction in the elementary schools.⁴⁰

Meanwhile through the request of American missionary societies working in Africa, the Phelps-Stokes Fund had in 1920 agreed to finance a commission of missionaries and educationists to probe and make recommendations after reviewing the existing systems of African education in West and South Africa. The report of this commission was

³⁵Education Department Annual Report, 1924.

³⁶Beecher Report, p. 4.

³⁷Osogo, p. 112.

³⁸White paper entitled Indians in Kenya, 1923. It clearly said that "Kenya is an African Country . . . that the interests of the African natives must be paramount, and that if, and when those interests and the interests of the immigrant races should conflict, the former should prevail." Government Command Paper No. 1922.

³⁹Ormsby-Gore was the British Under-Secretary of State for the colonies.

⁴⁰Osogo, p. 112.

published in 1922.⁴¹ The report, which tried to apply to the African system the experiences in Black American education in the United States, tried to spell out the dangers of adapting the western literacy education to the African.⁴² Even though this commission did not visit East Africa, it influenced Dr. J. H. Oldham, the first secretary of the Conference of Missionary Societies in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, to submit suggestions for cooperation between missions and government in education.⁴³ His recommendation favoured a modus vivendi between missions and government wherein the latter would increase the number of efficient educational missionaries as well as increasing educational budget.⁴⁴ Through such cooperation, the grants-in-aid to missionary societies for the purpose of education in 1924 totalled £ 10,346 out of the total expenditure on African education of £37,000.⁴⁵

A second Phelps-Stokes Commission arrived in East Africa early in 1924, in the company of a representative from the Colonial Office. The recommendations of this commission included increased spending of the East African governments on education, training of higher grades

⁴¹ Education in Africa, A study of West, South and Equatorial Africa by the African Education Commission, under the Auspices of the Phelps-Stokes Fund and Foreign Missionary Societies of N. America, Europe, New York, 1922.

⁴² Oliver, p. 265.

⁴³ J. H. Olman to Garfield Williams, Educational Secretary of the CMS 28th March, 1923, CMS Archives, London.

⁴⁴ J. H. Oldham to Manley (African Secretary of CMS), 15th Dec. 1924, Correspondence of J. H. Oldham, I.M.C. Archives, London.

⁴⁵ Jesse Jones, Education in East Africa (New York, 1924), p. 111.

of African teachers and cooperation between the government, the missionary and the settler in African education incorporating character building, health, agriculture, technical skill and recreation.⁴⁶ Among its highlights was the creation of the Heanes School, which was established early in 1925.⁴⁷ The school was to provide training for supervisors to assist elementary teachers, many of whom were not trained, to be good teachers. Even though the first principal, Mr. J. W. C. Dougall, was an educationist of high repute, the experiment did not work out because the best students were not given the opportunity to train as visiting teachers.⁴⁸

At Le Zoute Conference in 1926, Oldham exhorted Protestant missions to take education seriously in their missionary endeavour. He cautioned that missions in Africa could become an anachronistic unless they bore their witness among the new forces which were reshaping the lives of the people in Africa.⁴⁹ The major contribution of the Le Zoute Conference to education was that it hastened the production of literature in the African vernaculars, which in turn enhanced opportunities for literacy.⁵⁰ The Roman Catholic Church cooperated in this move when through Cardinal Bourne it mediated concerning the

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Osogo, p. 114. Also interview with W. H. Laughton. Laughton thinks that the character of the candidate was the determining factor, rather than academic qualification.

⁴⁹J. H. Oldham, "Introduction Address", International Review of Missions, XXIV (1927).

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 272.

formation of an International Institute of African Languages and Cultures.⁵¹ This acted as a clearing-house between governments, missions and academic centers as far as languages were concerned.

In 1924 the local native councils were formed and undertook some responsibility in education.⁵² The District Commissioners acted as chairmen, and the councils were empowered to collect taxes and rates, part of which was used for education within the District.⁵³ In Kikuyuland open hostility was shown against funds from local councils being used to aid mission schools. People wanted to have their own secular schools, independent of the mission ones.⁵⁴ These sentiments directed against mission schools precipitated the formation of the independent schools in Kikuyuland. They contributed a great deal to the rise of Kikuyu nationalism which became anti-European in outlook.⁵⁵

It was seen fit by the Alliance of Missions to advance African education to high-school level, and the first secondary school was built at Kikuyu in 1926 and named Alliance High School as a sign of cooperation among churches who were members of the Alliance of Missions. It was developed with the help of government grants-in-aid.⁵⁶

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²History of East Africa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), II, 350.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Provincial Annual Report, 1930, Kikuyu Province PC/CP15/2/1, Kenya National Archives, Nairobi.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Osogo, p. 115.

The first Roman Catholic secondary school was established at Kabaa, in Machakos in 1925. It was later transferred to Mangu.⁵⁷ Other secondary schools that followed later included Maseno in 1938 (CMS) and Yala (Catholic) in 1939.⁵⁸ These schools were supposed to carry the intellectually capable Africans beyond primary training.⁵⁹

In 1935 the Advisory Committee on education advised educators to be aware of the forces of disintegration in African societies. It advised concentration on adult education in order to reach as many people in the rural areas as possible.⁶⁰

The memorandum of 1935 did not get very far since the majority of Africans were looking for an academic type of education. The Jeanes School at Kabete, for example, had to close down in 1939 for its failure to aggressively pursue an academic type of training. What was needed was higher education which would open opportunities for jobs.⁶¹ The outbreak of World War II in 1939 seriously hampered the development of education by reducing the European staff that was to have helped in the expansion of secondary education and teacher-training.⁶² Some of the senior African teachers were conscripted into

⁵⁷Beecher Report, p. 4.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Kenya Education Department Annual Report, 1926, p. 13.

⁶⁰"Memorandum on Mass Education in African Society", Colonial No. 180, 1943, p. 11.

⁶¹C. P. Groves, The Planting of Christianity in Africa (London: Lutterworth, 1958), IV, 117.

⁶²Beecher Report, 1949, p. 9.

the army. There was a problem with finances, and the revision of the grant-in-aid rules in 1945 which gave full responsibility for the funding of schools to the Local Native Councils offered much needed relief.⁶³

The Beecher Report which was published in 1949 tried to look ahead in the planning of education. Apart from regulating and recommending proper salary scales for teachers, the Report insisted on the teaching of Christian principles in schools and colleges, together with competent and thorough supervision and inspection of schools.⁶⁴

Following the Beecher Report, the commission on education in 1953 recommended that:

- (1) Governments should plainly declare their moral and material support for deep and sincere religious belief as the basis of all education.
- (2) All boarding schools and at any rate some large day schools should have their own places of worship.⁶⁵

The Royal Commission, however, saw the weakness of the missions in education and recommended that:

Missions should not be encouraged to increase their responsibilities in education beyond what is required for school government and religious education. The professional supervision of all teaching, except that of religious education, should be in the hands of qualified officers appointed and employed by government.⁶⁶

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Beecher Report, 1949, p. 56.

⁶⁵Nutfield Foundation, African Education (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 134.

⁶⁶"East African Royal Commission, 1953-1955 Report" (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office 1955, Cmd 9475), p. 411.

The Beecher plan seems to have been based on the principle of high selectivity. Half of the students were supposed to drop out of elementary school after only four years of school and when they were eleven years old.⁶⁷ The majority would drop out after one additional class before entering junior secondary school. This explains why Africans were opposed to this type of planning. Since only eight percent of the children would go to primary school, it meant that only two percent would advance into the secondary schools.⁶⁸ Africans accused the Europeans of devising a method of providing cheap labour to the European settler community in the form of young school leavers.⁶⁹ This was one of the main reasons that prompted the Kikuyu Independent Schools to operate outside the development plan as outlined by the Beecher Report.⁷⁰ The combined pressure of wastage and examinations made it difficult for the would-be scholars to continue beyond a few elementary stages, as will be illustrated by 1946 figures which cover the whole country.

The development of independent schools lies outside the scope of this study. It is sufficient to point out that mission and government schools ran side-by-side with the African independent schools.

⁶⁷Beecher Report, p. 35.

⁶⁸Mutua, p. 111.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Kikuyu Province, Annual Report, 1930, PC/CP 15/2/1, Kenya National Archives, Nairobi.

TABLE 4

Class	Number on Roll	Class	Number on Roll
Standard 1	92,836	Form 1	2,057
2	42,704	2	1,571
3	26,579	3	179
4	21,097	4	145
5	17,743	5	34
6	3,598	6	37

Source: The Beecher Report, 1949.

The latter formed the breeding ground for the nationalist agitation, especially with the inauguration of Githunguri Teachers' College in 1930.⁷¹

By 1950 it had become apparent that the end of mission education was drawing near. The missionary supervisors were being replaced by better-qualified government education officers.⁷² Missions acknowledged the primary role of the government in education and accepted the lesser responsibility of providing for the teaching of religious education in schools.⁷³ With this in mind, the Christian Churches Education Association was formed in 1958.⁷⁴ The Churches still functioned as "managers" of schools until after the country's independence. Thereafter the Churches were happy to occupy the role of a "sponsor" as recommended by the Ominde Commission of 1964.⁷⁵ By permitting Church bodies to supply the religious aspect of school life, the commission was of the opinion that:

The historic practice of leaving the management of maintained primary schools in the hands of missions or Churches has outlived its usefulness and is no longer an appropriate basis for management in a secular state pledged to respect the basic individual rights in the Constitution.⁷⁶

The Methodist Church involvement with education must be regarded from this historical perspective in order to appreciate the

⁷¹Temu, p. 163.

⁷²Mutua, p. 116.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Kenya Education Commission Report, 1964.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 46.

efforts of the pioneers in building a firm foundation in education.

INVOLVEMENT OF THE METHODIST CHURCH IN EDUCATION

As has been pointed out earlier in this chapter, the school formed an integral part of the evangelistic effort in the Methodist Mission. The church building was used as a school during the day, and the catechist acted as the teacher. In 1902 it was reported that there was not a single separate school building in all the stations.⁷⁷ The cry at this time was the need to have specially qualified industrial teachers, capable of giving instructions in practical aspects of education, such as agriculture and technical skills.⁷⁸

In early times, educational work was not separated from general evangelism. By 1906 it was felt that this ought to be a separate department of work. It was realized that it was important to get "hold of the children and teach them the gospel while their minds are impressionable."⁷⁹

The annual report of 1920 makes it clear that the educational work was steadily progressing.⁸⁰ The arrival of Miss Taylor was greeted with enthusiasm, as she was to help in the establishment of

⁷⁷Methodist Free Church Magazine (1902), 15.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 22.

⁷⁹Missionary Echo (1906), 218.

⁸⁰U.M.C. Mission, Annual Report for 1920, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

girls' education.⁸¹ Plans were being developed to transfer elementary work to village schools so that central schools could concentrate on advanced classes.⁸² It was felt in 1924 that there was a need to establish an industrial school at Meru to serve Meru, the Coast and the Tana.⁸³ Such a venture was necessary in view of the demand for buildings and furniture. The total number of pupils in the school was to be thirty.⁸⁴ Mr. R. J. Brewer was recruited for this post and was considered fit for the appointment, subject to his improving technical drawing skills in order to satisfy the Kenya education department.⁸⁵

In 1928 educational work, particularly in Meru, was bolstered by the appointment of Mr. W. H. Laughton.⁸⁶ Mr. Laughton was to become the bulwark of the educational work in Meru. He carried the work from almost zero to a level that was even applauded by the government officials.⁸⁷ In 1928 Mr. Clay, the principal of the industrial school reports:

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid. Central schools were to be fed from the village schools.

⁸³Minutes of the joint meeting of the East Africa and Education Sub-Committee held at Bristol on Nov. 25 & 26, 1924, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Foreign Missions Committee, Oct. 23-24, 1928, Methodist Archives, London.

⁸⁷Interview with Laughton, Oct. 23, 1978. Confirmed by official reports.

The Africans are beginning to realize the benefit of craft training, and the older boys are now eager to be taken on as apprentices. The older boys, who have now been indentured about fourteen months, are making good progress. Their training has been expedited, with the dual object of coping with the work im hand, and also with a view to some of them, at least, taking their places in the school in the future as native instructors.⁸⁸

Having been firmly grounded, the educational work was moving forward by leaps and bounds. For the mission, the significant fact was that every teacher was essentially an evangelist and took long hours after school to teach those enquiring about the truth of the gospel.⁸⁹ The establishment of the girls' boarding school in Meru in 1936 meant an improvement of the girls' education.⁹⁰ There were forty girls who were eager to learn. To meet a more immediate demand, a number of betrothed girls were trained for periods ranging from six months to two years. The purpose of such training was not academic but practical. It was also intended to inculcate some Christian principles in those who were intending to marry Christian teachers and catechists.⁹¹ At this time village schools were being used by government agricultural offices for experiments with new crops. New methods of cultivation were being taught and encouraged.⁹² The spirit of the time is expressed by the dual role of teachers in village schools:

⁸⁸"Our Growing Work in Africa" Methodist Free Church Magazine, II (1928), 81.

⁸⁹A. J. Hopkins, "The Ice Melts on Mt. Kenya", Kingdom Overseas, (1936), 3.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 4.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid., p. 5.

Almost without exception this band of workers with splendid loyalty regards the spread of the gospel as far above the teaching in the schools. All conduct catechumen classes in addition to their teaching. After a tiring week they undertake long journeys on Sundays, exchanging with each other in the conduct of village services. Every school a Church and every village a preaching place.⁹³

The educational work of the mission was conceived to be four-fold: the training of intellectual leaders, the training of artisans, the training of persons to direct community health, and the training of evangelists. There was a steady progress in education as is depicted by the following official statistics compiled from individual returns given by Meru and Coast circuits.

In 1929 a permanent school building at Kaaga was erected, using local bricks. This was done with help from government grants.⁹⁴ By 1932 the government had increased grants-in-aid to schools, and the mission at Kaaga received £949.13s. for educational purposes. Local Native Councils were approached with a view to having them increase their educational grants. During the year, the Local Native Council of Digo had allocated 1,500/- for outschools, while application to the Meru Local Native Council to provide scholarships to Alliance High School was made.⁹⁵

⁹³Ibid., p. 6.

⁹⁴East Africa Executive Meeting, Meru, March 5 & 6, 1929, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

⁹⁵East Africa Executive Resolutions, Feb. 9 & 11, 1932, in File marked Synods, 1918-1948, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

TABLE 5

YEAR	CIRCUIT	CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY	BOYS	SCHOLARS GIRLS	SCHOOLS
1936	Coast	570	799	217	20
	Meru	413	1,314	100	22
1937	Coast	733	929	316	22
	Meru	586	1,519	165	19
1938	Coast	845	1,305	377	30
	Meru	915	862	128	18
1939	Coast	1,017	1,246	275	37
	Meru	1,286	731	103	30
1940	Coast	1,171	1,220	290	33
	Meru	1,769	828	153	33
1941	Coast	1,208	1,273	257	31
	Meru	1,871	1,109	187	39
1942	Coast	1,324	1,414	231	30
	Meru	2,015	1,384	230	38
1943	Coast	1,437	1,388	172	30
	Meru	2,066	1,858	232	39
1944	Coast	1,208	1,105	194	28
	Meru	1,932	2,634	323	44
1945	Coast	1,488	1,587	266	27
	Meru	2,210	2,361	340	50

Source: Compiled from Methodist Archives, Nairobi. The figures do not include boarding scholars.

TABLE 6

THE GROWTH OF METHODIST EDUCATION - 1947 STATISTICS:

Teachers	Coast	Meru	Total
	56	81	137
Day } Girls	267	583	850
Scholars } Boys	1,329	2,909	4,238
Boarding } Girls	23	34	57
Scholars } Boys	124	80	204

Source: Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

During the district synod in 1934, a concern was expressed that there was a danger in the outschools that teachers who had become certificated were getting so absorbed in the teaching of secular subjects that they lost keenness of evangelism. This was seen as a deviation from the original purpose of mission schools. The remedy recommended was an increased oversight of outschools by the European missionaries.⁹⁶ It was urged also that outschool teachers ought to be more efficiently trained in matters of Faith and Order.⁹⁷ Even in the wake of increased government grants, missions tended to take advantage of school teachers in the propagation of faith and furtherance of mission spheres of interest. Teachers increasingly felt that they were being exploited by being asked to do two jobs, but paid for one only.⁹⁸

1939 looked to be a bad year, especially in Meru. From an average of fourteen hundred scholars at the beginning of the year, there was only an average of nine hundred twenty-six at the end of the year.⁹⁹ It was a setback resulting from initiation ceremonies and the outbreak of World War II.

But the work at the Coast was at least holding on, and there were signs of fruition. Grants from the local native councils had been

⁹⁶Minutes of Representative and Pastoral Sessions of District Synod, 1934, p. 6. Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Interview with Laughton, October 23, 1978.

⁹⁹Synod Report, Kenya District, 1939, p. 2.

increased, and a plan to build a girls' boarding school at Ribe was slowly taking shape.¹⁰⁰ The highlight of the year was the interest shown by the first university-trained Africans to teach in primary schools. From the Coast came Mr. Charles Herbert, while Mr. Solomon Magambo hailed from Meru. Both had completed a teaching diploma at Makerere University and were intending to join the rank and file of African teachers.¹⁰¹ At Meru while boys' education had declined, girls' education seemed to improve, especially after the arrival of Miss Bertha Jones in 1937 and more especially after the war. For the first time, payment of fees was introduced in the girls' school.¹⁰²

It should be pointed out at this juncture that after the outbreak of World War II, in the Tana River area the government was faced with the difficulty of continuing the educational work which had been sustained through the endeavour of the German Neukirchen Mission, after the withdrawal of the Methodist Mission from the area since 1936.¹⁰³ The Education Department was requested to provide funds for paying teachers' salaries, while the Methodist Missionary Society was asked to accept the responsibility of the management of the schools from the mission station at Ribe.¹⁰⁴ To expect smooth running of the schools when the managers were more than two hundred miles away was far from being realistic. It was soon realized that

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Beecher Report, 1949, p. 26.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

TABLE 7

EDUCATION AT THE COAST: NUMBERS ON ROLL AT APRIL 1939

Primary Grades:	A	B	1	2	3	4	Total
Ribe: Boys	483	120	108	59	30	10	810
Girls	53	9	8	4	0	0	74
Mazeras: Boys	397	63	38	26	16	6	546
Girls	148	26	6	12	0	0	192
TOTAL	1,1081	218	160	101	46	16	1,622

Source: Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

TABLE 8

A Chart Showing Cost of Elementary Education
Supported by the Methodist Mission in 1939

Source	Coast	Meru	Total
Government Grant £	-	294	294
Fees £	422	54	376
Mission Committee Grant £	817	411	1,228
Total £	1,239	759	1,898

Source: Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

a center had to be established in Tana River so that the management and the supervision of schools in the area could be physically carried out. The Beecher Report of 1949 recommended such a center at Garsen.¹⁰⁵ This center was never established.

Even though the statistics do not support it, the missionaries report that the years between 1940 and 1950 were characterized by great expansion of educational facilities in the Meru District. This was also a time of rivalries between Protestant and Catholic missions concerning the procurement of schools, especially in the Meru District where Methodists and Roman Catholics were at loggerheads concerning the opening of new schools in new areas.¹⁰⁶ The cost of education was increasingly biting into the mission funds, and the mission started feeling the pinch. The Methodist Mission felt that since "education is a primary duty of Government, and that (since) no government has the right to claim to rule any people unless it is prepared to organize the education of that people . . . education is a state enterprise, in a sense after protection, it is the first duty of any government to any community."¹⁰⁷ It was the general feeling that no educational system administered by religious bodies should be tolerated, if any section of the community is compelled to accept a certain denominational or sectarian definition of Christianity as a price for the provision of

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Interview with Naaman M'Mwirichia, March 23, 1979.

¹⁰⁷Kenya District Synod Reports, 1943 Cp. L p. 1.

educational facilities.¹⁰⁸ But missions continued to cling to schools, even when they felt their finances were inadequate for such a major commitment.¹⁰⁹

The government, however, increased its aid towards educational facilities. In 1947 for example, the government grant to the Methodist Mission was £4,372 out of the total Methodist expenditure on education of £5,712.¹¹⁰ Whereas Table 8 shows government grants in 1939 to represent only about sixteen percent of total expenditures, eight years later, they approximate seventy-six percent of the total. The government continued to supply inspectors of schools to ensure uniform standards of education in all schools. The Methodist Church, following other churches, recommended the church's own Christian supervisors to ensure the maintenance of good moral standards and efficiency of teachers.¹¹¹

1947 saw the opening of two teacher training centers initiated by the Methodist Church. One was situated at Ribe, while the second one was built in Meru.¹¹² These institutions ensured the provision of teachers for the expanding educational network. Since the policy of

¹⁰⁸Ibid. p. 2.

¹⁰⁹Interview with W. H. Laughton, October 23, 1978.

¹¹⁰Kenya District Synod Minutes, 1946, L-I.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Interview with Laughton, October 23, 1978.

TABLE 9

A Chart showing the progress of Education in
Methodist Schools in the Meru District.

Year	No. of Schools	Total Average Roll	Total Average Attend.	Percent- age of Attend.	Average Roll Girls	Average Roll per School	Average Attend. per Sch.
1929	11	475	254	57	no fig.	41	23
1930	6	222	123	55	"	37	21
1931	9	336	209	62	14	37	23
1932	11	564	328	67	31	51	30
1933	14	712	415	58	37	51	30
1934	18	1,277	710	56	76	71	40
1935	19	1,808	980	54	98	95	52
1936		no	figures				
1937	20	1,540	915	59	136	77	46
1938	18	1,572	862	54	159	87	48
1939	20	976	619	63	69	49	31
1940	25	1,024	668	65	94	41	27
1941	26	1,465	1,075	73	182	56	41
1942	27	1,511	1,155	76	188	56	42
1943	28	1,870	1,488	80	199	67	53
1944	28	2,448	2,014	82	260	87	72
1945	28	3,077	2,720	88	355	110	97

Source: W. H. Laughton's papers, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

the Methodist educational work was expansion without dilution, it was necessary to produce qualified teachers before new schools were opened.¹¹³

By the middle of the 1950's and up to the beginning of the 1960's, educational work was increasingly placed in the hands of the Local Native Councils (LNC), and especially under the responsibility of the District Education Boards.¹¹⁴ The influence of the churches on education was diminishing to a considerable degree. It seemed as though churches were being prepared for the state take-over.¹¹⁵ The Government finally took over the responsibility of running schools in 1964. Thereafter churches were relegated to the status of "sponsors";¹¹⁶ hence Religious Education Advisors were engaged to look at the welfare of only religious teaching in schools.

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

This chapter would be incomplete without describing the part that agricultural education played in the missionary enterprise, particularly of the Methodist Church. From the very beginning, the

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Interview with Naaman M'Mwirichia, March 23, 1979.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Sponsorship was limited to helping with religious content of school life, and in particular, with religious instruction. (Kenya Education Commission Report, Para. 1, Nairobi, 1964, p. 34-35).

Methodist mission aimed at developing agricultural instruction.¹¹⁷

One objective in bringing agriculture into the school curriculum was to inculcate in the students a realization of the vital importance of agriculture in their community.¹¹⁸ A second objective, especially as it involved large estates, was the desire to be self-supporting in the missionary field, thus relieving the home church of the burden of supporting even trivial activities in the mission field.¹¹⁹ However missionaries believe their desire to involve students in agriculture was interpreted by Africans as a desire to train workers with a view to enmeshing them in the web of European economic enterprise,¹²⁰ as if the settlers had conspired with the missionaries to ensure the abundance of cheap labour to work in their plantations.¹²¹ As a result of lack of interest, agriculture declined in the school curriculum, though traditionally every school had a garden.

The Methodist Mission felt that agriculture was the key to success in East Africa. The Mission, therefore, acquired large tracts of land. The report of the District Commissioner at Malindi in 1910 stated that the estate of the Methodists at Ribe was the best in the District. The estate had twenty-two thousand rubber trees realizing about £1,000 annually.¹²² We note from a missionary account of 1906

¹¹⁷Interview with Laughton.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Tana River District Political Records, Vol. II DC/TRD 3/2.

that there were thirteen acres of cotton at the plot of land at Golbanti with prospects of having it enlarged.¹²³ The 1909 report indicates that at Ribe there were good prospects for extending agricultural work which was under Mr. Lory, a trained agriculturist.¹²⁴ There was already a fifty-acre plantation of Ceara rubber with about nineteen thousand, six hundred and sixty trees.¹²⁵ In addition, there were fifty acres planted with cotton, thirty-eight acres with coconuts and about ten thousand lemon seedlings.¹²⁶ Altogether the mission owned seven hundred fifty acres at Ribe.

The above account demonstrates that the Methodist Mission was involved in commercial agriculture. As would be expected, the problem of such an enterprise would be the availability of adequate labour. In 1912 the United Methodist Mission boasted that it was not dependent on indentured labour and expressed strong disapproval for this type of labour.¹²⁷ But in 1920 when the mission felt the pinch of a labour shortage, it resorted to forced labour in order to secure workers.¹²⁸

The United Methodist Mission had acquired other large tracts of land in addition to the Ribe one. It owned six thousand acres in

¹²³Duerden, p. 36.

¹²⁴J. J. Lory, "Agricultural Report", Methodist Free Church Magazine (1909), 50.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹²⁷Minute Book of the U.M. Foreign Committee.

¹²⁸Coast 2/549, Kenya National Archives, Nairobi.

Tana River, near Golbanti, and five hundred acres at Mazeras.¹²⁹ In addition to this the mission had the following tracts of land in the Coast:¹³⁰

TABLE 10

Title No.	Plot No.	Acres	Location
CR 8010	1271	100	Miyani
CR 8011	1272	50	Mgandini
CR 8009	1274	50	Mkanyeni
CR 8396	1270	100	Pemba
CR 8395	1275	100	Lueni
CR 8397	1278	100	Mtsangatifu

There were also other plots held at Chaani (Jomvu), one hundred sixty-three acres, and at Changamwe - Miritini, two hundred sixteen acres.

Since the estates were posing a real problem in the life of the mission,¹³¹ it was decided in 1943 to hand over most of these plots to the elders to minimize friction and misunderstanding between the mission and the people.¹³² Henceforth it was deemed appropriate to have agricultural land attached to the school only in the form of a demonstration plot.¹³³

¹²⁹Kilifi Political Records, Vol. II, Annual Report 1910-11, KFI II, Kenya National Archives, Nairobi.

¹³⁰Kenya District Synod Minutes, January 1943, p. 7.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³Interview with Naaman M'Mwirichia, March 23, 1979.

The agricultural-education endeavour of the Methodist Mission failed. Several explanations have been offered:

- (1) It failed to integrate academic work and practical aspects of the curriculum, so that agriculture became an unnecessary and irrelevant appendage.¹³⁴
- (2) Students were encouraged to concentrate on academic subjects that were generously rewarded by white-collar jobs. This inevitably led them to despise manual work which was relegated to those who could not get very far with formal education.¹³⁵
- (3) Commercialized agriculture was started without the necessary infrastructures, namely markets, transportation, pest-control and storage facilities. Furthermore, students were not encouraged to grow food crops. Interest was lost only when such cash crops as cotton, coconut and rubber were introduced.¹³⁶
- (4) Teachers used to send students to work in the school garden, not as a means of instruction, but as a punishment for wrongdoing. Agriculture was inevitably associated with manual work, given to those who had misbehaved.¹³⁷ Some teachers used the students' yield for their personal gain, an attitude that killed incentive to learn skills in agriculture.¹³⁸

Even with the best of intentions, missionaries failed to convince their African students that agriculture was meant to be part of their overall education. Instead this failure made the students suspect their teachers of having ulterior motives as far as agricultural work was concerned. This failure obscured the main objective of the mission in education and persists to this very day.

¹³⁴Interview with Hezekiah M'Mukiri, March 1, 1975.

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶Methodist Free Church Magazine (1932), 75.

¹³⁷Interview with Naaman M'Mwirichia.

¹³⁸Ibid.

MEDICAL WORK

The extended consideration of the educational aspects of missionary work is not intended to convey the impression that this was the only important factor in the missionary endeavour. Since the missions in Kenya started with vigour at the beginning of this century, healing went side by side with enlightenment (education) and evangelism. Medical and educational work in particular were seen as related and as forming an important component of evangelistic endeavours.¹³⁹ Missions were fond of using medical doctors as their pioneers. A conspicuous example would be the Presbyterian pioneers in East Africa who included ordained doctors.¹⁴⁰ Most of the doctors' time was spent in education. For a long time, however, the Methodists in Kenya lamented the fact that no doctors could be found for their East African Mission, a fact that obliged their missionaries to act as amateur medical practitioners.¹⁴¹ Even though missions such as the CMS had doctors, the idea of a medical mission as something existing in its own right was lacking.

The medical mission developed when Christian communities emerged and needed the services of a doctor.¹⁴² As numbers of Christians increased, and because the missionaries desired to discourage their converts from paying visits to traditional medicine men, it was seen fit

¹³⁹ Oliver, p. 210. ¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Methodist Free Church Magazine (1914), 67.

¹⁴² Oliver, p. 211.

to constitute the medical mission as a social institution of the Christian community.¹⁴³ Henceforth the roles of doctors and educationists were separated.

African Christians, remember that even converts to Christianity were more attracted to medicine men than physicians and only went for medical treatment as a last resort.¹⁴⁴ If the traditional medicine-men and diviners (wrongly called witch-doctors by Western writers) were to be overcome, the medical mission had to be established and maintained.¹⁴⁵ This was the beginning of the changed role of the medical missionary. The missionary doctor had to abandon his evangelistic itinerations and concentrate on the establishment of a training center in the hospital where African nurses and medical assistants could be trained. The hope of overcoming the diviner and medicine-man lay in having Africans who were well versed in modern medical techniques; they would eventually sabotage the efforts of traditional medicine-men whose "primitive" instruments were no match for the modern medical equipment used by the Western doctors.¹⁴⁶

A second reason for the prominence of the medical mission was that it was conceived by the missionaries as a possible weapon against

¹⁴³Interview with Solomon Ndethiu, December 1975.

¹⁴⁴Interview with Jusufu Ntimbu, December 18, 1974.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

¹⁴⁶Interview with Samson M'Mutiga, December 18, 1974. Cf. Methodist Free Church Magazine (1918), 54.

the institution of polygamy.¹⁴⁷ It was argued that if survival of children could be assured, thus lowering the rate of infant mortality, then African Christians would be encouraged to renounce polygamy. This objective called for more community nurses, midwives, dieticians, and paediatricians to do this work.¹⁴⁸ The medical missionary was fast becoming prominent in the missionary sphere, and a vacuum was felt in situations where no medical missionary was available.

From the very beginning the Methodist Mission considered medical work to be important. Even though there were no trained doctors available, missionaries or their spouses carried this work as far as it was physically possible. Many of the missionaries took short medical courses in preparation for their careers. Reporting on the medical work in 1914, the Rev. J. B. Griffiths, General Superintendent of the East Africa District of the Methodist Mission, wrote:

Our little dispensary has again proved a boon and blessing to hundreds of suffering men and women, but we cannot do all that we desire in this direction. Often for lack of medical knowledge we have to send away needy patients unhelped.¹⁴⁹

In yet another annual report, the Rev. Griffiths in 1918 bemoaned the meagerness of the healing ministry of the Methodist Mission.¹⁵⁰ He reminded the home mission committee that the East African stations

¹⁴⁷Oliver, p. 211.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹Methodist Free Church Magazine (1914), 67.

¹⁵⁰Methodist Free Church Magazine (1918), 53.

"have never been honoured by having a doctor appointed to them."¹⁵¹

He indicated that the missionaries who were doing an amateurish ministry in healing were so conscious of their serious limitations that they looked for the day when a doctor would be in their midst.¹⁵²

The appointment of a medical doctor had to wait until 1928 when Dr. H. W. Brassington was appointed to open up the first Methodist hospital in Kenya at a place called Kiegoi in Meru.¹⁵³ The Foreign Missions Committee in 1928 approved the building of a 50-bed hospital after obtaining a government grant of £500 towards the building expenses.¹⁵⁴ It was discovered later that as a result of the poor quality of soil at Kiegoi, it was impossible to secure good foundations for a hospital. A decision was quickly made that the site be changed to Maua and that the work proceed immediately.¹⁵⁵ The government gave the mission a further incentive by offering a recurrent grant to cover 11 out of 50 beds.¹⁵⁶

The task of building started in 1929, and through the help of the District Commissioner, Mr. J. G. Hopkins, the hospital was fully operative by the end of 1930.¹⁵⁷ During the same year the hospital

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Ibid.

¹⁵³Methodist Free Church Magazine (1929), 46.

¹⁵⁴Resolutions of the Foreign Missions Committee Meeting, Baillie St. Church, Rochdale, October 23-24, 1928.

¹⁵⁵Minutes of East Africa Executive Committee Meeting, Meru, March 5-6, 1929, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷Methodist Free Church Magazine (1930), 58.

staff was augmented by the services of two missionary nurses, nurse Tate and nurse Brassington.¹⁵⁸ As these records of 1931 show, the hospital was making steady progress, meeting a real need.

By 1940 a large number of people were going to hospitals and dispensaries for treatment. In that year there were over one thousand in-patients and 31,141 outpatients who had been treated in Methodist mission medical centers.¹⁵⁹ In addition to the main hospital at Maua, extensive work was carried on in dispensaries situated at strategic geographical locations: Ribe, Mazeras, Lare and Athi.¹⁶⁰ The dispensary at Ribe occupied a special place since it was wholly financed by the Local Native Council but sponsored by the Methodist Mission.¹⁶¹ A weekly visit to Ribe was made by the medical missionary from the Church Missionary Society hospital at Kaloleni whose services were sought by the Methodist Mission. Subsidies to other medical centers were made by the government and local native councils, thus cutting the mission's expense on medical work to a bare minimum.¹⁶² In 1940, for example, the total medical expenditure by the Methodist Missionary Society was only £600.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸A. J. Hopkins, "A Bird's eye View of our work," Missionary Echo (June 1931), 150.

¹⁵⁹Synod Minutes, 1941, p. L-3 Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁶¹*Ibid.*

¹⁶²*Ibid.*

¹⁶³*Ibid.*

TABLE 11

MAUA HOSPITAL ATTENDANCE, APRIL TO DECEMBER 1931

Month	New Patients	Repeats
April	421	389
May	462	649
June	510	573
July	427	436
August	489	492
September	550	646
October	740	833
November	837	1116
December	970	1455

TABLE 12

DISEASES AMONG IN-PATIENTS

Type of Disease	Percentage
Yaws	46
Malaria	16
Worms	20
Amoebic Dysentery	5.5
Influenza	3.8
T.B.	2
Cancer	2

Source: Methodist Free Church Magazine, 1932, p. 72.

In 1947 the expansion of Maua Hospital was undertaken through the establishment of a tuberculosis ward. All the costs of erecting the buildings together with recurrent expenditures were underwritten by the Meru Local Native Council.¹⁶⁴ A training scheme for African hospital assistants was started as an effort to increase the work force in the hospital.¹⁶⁵ By 1948 the volume of work at the hospital had expanded so much so that the medical committee of the Christian Council of Kenya made a strenuous effort to procure more funds from the government in aid of mission hospitals.¹⁶⁶ It became necessary for the Methodist Church to oversee the Ngao dispensary. Occasional visits were made by the medical personnel at Maua until the hospital was inaugurated by 1950, thus underlining the tremendous need for more effective and adequate medical services on the River.¹⁶⁷ The medical work continued to grow and expand as these figures would show.

African Christians who remember the early years of Methodist medical work understood that it was part of the Church's effort to eradicate completely the superstitious practices and taboos that were practiced by African communities.¹⁶⁸ They felt that the missionaries

¹⁶⁴Synod Minutes, 1947, p. M-1, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

¹⁶⁵Ibid.

¹⁶⁶Synod Minutes, 1948, P.M.I. Methodist Archives, Nairobi. The Medical Committee later became the Protestant Churches Medical Association.

¹⁶⁷Ibid.

¹⁶⁸Interview with Kornelio M'Mukiira, December 18, 1974.

TABLE 13

A CHART SHOWING THE PROGRESS OF THE MEDICAL
WORK DONE BY METHODIST CHURCH

Year	Category	Mazeras	Maua	Kaaga	Athi	Ribe	Total
1935	Inpatients		125				125
	Outpatients	3,601	25,593	14,081	8,706	-	51,981
1936	Inpatients		316				316
	Outpatients	9,056	5,977	10,748	2,858	-	28,639
1937	Inpatients		487				487
	Outpatients	5,088	7,736	4,017	-	-	16,841
1938	Inpatients		885				885
	Outpatients	4,327	18,475	-	-	-	22,802
1940	Inpatients		1,028				1,028
	Outpatients	4,241	16,900	Lare	10,000	-	31,141
1944	Inpatients		1,293				1,293
	Outpatients	6,389	5,374	7,195	2,942	8,729	30,629
1945	Inpatients		1,823				1,823
	Outpatients	4,664	5,515	7,022	3,242	12,136	32,579
1946	Inpatients		2,066				2,066
	Outpatients	3,767	7,004	10,104	2,772	15,385	44,032

Source: Synod Minutes and Reports, Methodist Archives, Nairobi

were, therefore, disenchanted to discover that even after a long experience with scientific medicine, Africans were still consulting their diviners and medicine men.¹⁶⁹ The missionaries are remembered as filled with consternation when they realized that Christians themselves would go to consult diviners in secrecy.¹⁷⁰ African Christians did not see any contradiction between visiting a medical doctor in a mission hospital on the one hand, and visiting a traditional medicine man on the other. The two were complementary. The progressive ones were dissuaded from visiting the medicine man because of their respect for the missionaries.¹⁷¹ If the traditional medicine did not work, they felt at liberty to visit the missionary doctor for help. As far as they were concerned, the missionary doctor was another medicine man whose medicine and charms ought to be tested.¹⁷² This would explain why many non-Christians flocked to mission hospitals and dispensaries even when they would not go to Church.

The success of the healing ministry depended on the devotion of the workers, both Africans and Europeans. The involvement of the Church in alleviating physical suffering demonstrated its care and concern for the community. This helped to change the attitude of the non-Christians from open hostility towards the Church to a friendly

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰Interview with Samson M'Mutiga, December 18, 1974.

¹⁷¹Interview with Isaiah Ndethiu, January 1979.

¹⁷²Ibid.

attitude. Healing ministry was often seen as a practical manner in which to conduct evangelistic campaigns.

Chapter VIII

ECUMENISM, UNITY AND COOPERATION (1918-1966)

TOWARD THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

Having considered the historical development of the Methodist Church in its evangelistic endeavours, it is fitting to mention something about its growth in relation to other Churches. The intent of my development of this chapter is to demonstrate how Churches in Kenya have struggled to seek unity, not in order to become a mammoth institution, but in an effort to seek earnestly how their witnessing could be made more meaningful.

The history of Church cooperation in Kenya stems from the Conference of Missionaries working Nyanza that was held in 1908, at the Church Missionary Society headquarters at Maseno.¹ This Conference was attended by representatives from the African Inland Mission, Seventh Day Adventists, Church Missionary Society and American Friends (Quakers).² The group had met to discuss, among other things, local problems pertaining to the evangelistic efforts of all missions concerned. No thought of organizational unity as such entered their minds, but they dealt with matters of mutual concern, such as

¹ Roland Oliver, The Missionary Factor in East Africa (London: Longman, 1952), p. 225.

² Ibid.

recognizing spheres of influence in order to avoid friction, translation and linguistic problems.³

A second conference was held in Nyanza in January 1909 and dealt with such matters as preparation for baptism and native marriage laws.⁴ During this conference a resolution was passed urging the missions to work towards an African Church as the goal of their missionary work.⁵

The first meeting of the United Missionary Conference that endorsed the resolution of the Nyanza conference met on June 7-11, 1909 in Nairobi. A paper was read by Archdeacon Willis, who later became the Bishop of Uganda, entitled "The Desirability of a Single Native Church in British East Africa".⁶ This conference was attended by the African Inland Mission, Church of Scotland Mission, the Church Missionary Society, the Seventh Day Adventists, the American Friends, the United Methodist Mission, and the English Friends Mission in Pemba.⁷ This conference appointed a subcommittee to look into the possibility of the Protestant Missionary Societies in East Africa

³E. K. Cole, A History of Church Cooperation in Kenya (Limuru: St. Paul's College Press, 1957), p. 3.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Report of the United Missionary Conference held at Nairobi, June 7-11th 1909 (Nairobi: Advertiser Coy., 1909).

⁷Ibid. The two Quaker Missions and the Seventh Day Adventists apparently withdrew their full support between 1909 and 1913. They continued to attend consultations as observers.

forming one United Church and the viability of such a proposal.⁸

The primary idea that Willis was anxious to promote was the danger that he saw inherent in the missions, namely, allowing the differences of mother churches to be passed on to the African Christians. He felt that missions ought to constrain themselves from bequeathing to the African Church their own differences and dissensions which always followed denominational lines.⁹ To avoid this danger missions were being asked to recommend and adhere to one formal standard for Church membership, a uniform code of discipline, a common attitude towards African customs, a common form of worship, and a standard training scheme based on the recognition of scriptures and creeds.¹⁰ Willis had the support of Dr. Henry Scott, the head of the Church of Scotland Mission.¹¹ These proposals led to the formulation of the guidelines for a Federation of Missions¹² which were given prominence during the Kikuyu Conference of 1913.

The Kikuyu Conference which was called in June, 1913 was given the mandate to probe into the problems that stood in the way of the proposed federation and find solutions to those problems. The scheme of federation reflected the Anglican point of view and followed the

⁸Ibid.

⁹Oliver, p. 225.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Comprising of the C.M.S., the C.S.M., the A.I.M. and the United Methodists.

guidelines of the "Lambeth Quadrilateral" of 1888.¹³ The four guidelines were as follows:

- (1) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as "containing all things necessary for salvation", and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.
- (2) The Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed.
- (3) The two sacraments ordained by Christ--Baptism and the Lord's Supper, ministered with the use of words of institution.
- (4) The "Historic Episcopate" locally adapted to suit the varying needs of the nations and people.¹⁴

After the scheme was adopted following the above guidelines, a service of Holy Communion was held at the close of the meeting. The Anglican Bishop of Mombasa celebrated the Holy Communion using the Anglican rite, to which all delegates were invited except the Quakers.¹⁵ This sparked off a bitter controversy which was ignited by Bishop Frank Weston of Zanzibar,¹⁶ indicating the Bishops of Mombasa and Uganda before the Archbishop of Canterbury, under the mistaken assumption that the proposed Federation had actually taken place.¹⁷ What was at stake was the assumption that the Kikuyu Conference paved the way for the

¹³Cole, p. 4.

¹⁴"Proposed Scheme of Federation of Missionary Societies Working in British East Africa" (Nairobi: Leader), 1913.

¹⁵Oliver, p. 226.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 227.

¹⁷"Proposed scheme of Federation of Missionary Societies Working in British East Africa", p. 6.

Angelicans to receive communion from ministers of other denominations who were not episcopally ordained.¹⁸

In answer to the charge that he was in fact encouraging inter-communion without the sanction of home authority, Bishop Willis replied that the Kikuyu proposals did not, in fact, go so far as to advise on such intercommunion, although they did not forbid such a move.¹⁹

Bishop Weston was concerned to see that the episcopate was made the basis for reunion; to allow unconfirmed persons from other missions to be admitted to Anglican communions and by implication, to allow Anglicans to attend non-anglican communions was tantamount to admitting that other forms of ministries were valid as well.²⁰

After procrastinating for a length of time because of the outbreak of World War I, the Archbishop of Canterbury pointed out in 1915 that while those who were not episcopally confirmed could be admitted to the Holy Communion, a decision that was left to the discretion of individual Bishops, reception of Holy Communion by Anglicans from the hands of those who were not episcopally ordained would consequently lead to confusion and had better be avoided.²¹ In December, 1915, the

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹J. J. Willis, Towards a United Church (London: Edinburgh House, 1947), p. 42.

²⁰Frank, Bishop of Zanzibar, "Ecclesia Anglicana--for what does she stand?" An open letter to Edgar, Bishop of St. Albans by Frank, Bishop of Zanzibar (London: Longmans, 1914).

²¹Willis, p. 47.

Standing Committee of the Kikuyu Conference met to review and make a decision on what should be done in view of the fact that the proposed federation was grinding to a standstill. The Committee put forward proposals for an Alliance of Missions which still had as its goal a reunion. This was accepted by the second Kikuyu Conference in 1918.²²

The conference opened on July 22, 1918 with representatives from the Church Missionary Society, the Church of Scotland Mission, the African Inland Mission and the United Methodist Church Mission.²³ Consideration was given to the possibility of having organic union as the ultimate goal. Bishop Weston was given a hearing and stressed that on his part he would be willing to consider a united Church so long as:

the non-episcopal bodies would . . . consent to some Episcopal consecration and ordination so as to enable them to minister, by invitation, in episcopal Churches.²⁴

When other missions were asked to respond to this proposal, the Rev. C. E. Hurlburt, who was the director of the African Inland Mission, pointed out in his address that his mission felt that "no basis of union which placed the Church above the word of God and no ecclesiastical control which limited personal liberty in vital things" could be accepted.²⁵ The African Inland Mission was voicing its fear

²²J. W. Arthur, Towards a United Church (London: Edinburgh House, 1947), p. 60-62.

²³Kikuyu 1918. Report of United Conference of Missionary Societies in British East Africa (Nairobi: Swift Press 1918), p. 6.

²⁴Ibid., p. 8.

²⁵Ibid., p. 9.

that communion with Church Missionary Society would inevitably lead them to communion with University Missions in Central Africa (U.M.C.A.), which as a high Church was suspected of modernism.²⁶ The African Inland Church was asking for liberty so that Anglicans who were attending Baptist Churches could be rebaptized if they so desired. They also requested that non-teetotalers be excluded from full membership of a united Church.²⁷ After an unsuccessful attempt to set up the basis for Union, the missions assented to the formation of an alliance of missions.²⁸ The constitution of the alliance was worded in the confessional manner as the following extract will show:

We, the representatives of the Allied Societies, being profoundly convinced, for the sake of our common Lord, and of those African Christians to whom our controversies are as yet unknown, of the need for a United Church in British East Africa, earnestly entreat the Home Authorities to take such steps as may be necessary, in consultation with the Churches concerned, to remove the difficulties which at present make this idea impossible. In the meantime, we adopt the Basis of Alliance, not as the 'ideal', but as the 'utmost possible' in view of our present unhappy divisions.²⁹

Resolutions were passed concerning the desire to cooperate in the advancement of general education, theological training, medical work, and evangelistic outreach.³⁰ The conference deplored the "existing conditions of immorality between the European and native populations of the

²⁶C. E. Hurlburt, Director of the African Inland Church, to Bishop Willis of Uganda, on April 22, 1916, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Kikuyu 1918, p. 9.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 20-22.

Protectorate" and asked the representative council to seek a redress from the government authorities.³¹

A third Missionary Conference was held at Kikuyu in 1922, after the encouraging attitude of the Lambeth Conference of 1920. The Lambeth Conference had made it clear that they would favour further progress of Church Union and recommended ordination of African ministers to be done by all participating Churches.³² In 1924, it was seen fit to hold a meeting of the representative council of the Alliance to discuss the possibilities of having a wider representation, perhaps incorporating all Protestant missionary societies to form a United Missionary Council. It was envisaged that such a council would form a liaison with the International Missionary Council in Britain.³³ At the meeting the Kenya Missionary Council was formed which was later to become the Christian Council of Kenya. The ambitious scheme for the Alliance Missionary College was abandoned in favour of Alliance High School.³⁴ Mr. G. A. Grieve of the Church of Scotland Mission was appointed as the first principal of the school which was opened in March 1926.³⁵ In 1927 the Church Missionary Society undertook to

³¹Ibid., p. 22.

³²Cole, p. 8.

³³Report of the Representative Meeting of the Alliance, April 24, 1924, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

³⁴M. G. Capon, Towards Unity in Kenya (Nairobi: Christian Council of Kenya, 1962), p. 31.

³⁵Ibid.

transfer its Divinity School from Freretown at the coast to a more healthy spot in the highlands. It was recommended that such a school ought to be at Alliance ground in Kikuyu, in order to be utilized by all churches.³⁶ It was hoped that this would be a second Alliance institution, but plans were changed in favour of an Anglican Divinity School in another site. The School was established at Limuru in 1928.³⁷ The School was approached by the Church of Scotland in 1930, requesting the acceptance of their students. The request was readily granted, thus beginning the foundations for a United Divinity School.³⁸

The Methodist representatives to the Kenya Missionary Council in 1930 were the Rev. Mr. A. G. V. Cozens and the Rev. Mr. R. T. Worthington.³⁹ Methodists were disturbed by the decision of the Alliance that spheres of influence should continue as before. It was felt that to continue to uphold spheres would eventually defeat the purpose of the Alliance. The East African executive meeting of the Methodist Church resolved in 1930:

That this Executive dissociates itself from the suggestions outlined in the memorandum on the policy of Mission spheres, since they appear to us to tend in the direction of establishing and perpetuating the spirit of denominationalism, contrary to the intentions of the Alliance of Missionary Societies in Kenya as expounded at "Kikuyu 1918."⁴⁰

³⁶Ibid., p. 32.

³⁷Cole, p. 10.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Resolutions of the E. Africa Executive, Meru February 10th to 12th, 1930, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

⁴⁰East Africa Executive Meeting, Meru, March 5-6, 1930, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

Church Union negotiations gained momentum once more after the Lambeth Conference of 1930. Since the Lambeth Conference had given a green light to the proposals for church union in South India, it was deemed appropriate to begin the discussions afresh.⁴¹ A conference was held on October 13 and 14, 1932 where the South India scheme was accepted and a representative continuation committee appointed.⁴² The committee which met in July 1932 produced a document entitled "Church Union in East Africa. Proposed Basis of Union."⁴³

It is interesting to see how indifferent the Methodists were to the proposals. After a discussion in the Synod, it was decided that it would be fitting to report to the Missionary Committee in London on what was going on. After reporting that informal conversations concerning the proposal in progress, the draft of a suggested constitution was "forwarded to the Missionary Committee without criticism or recommendation for the time being."⁴⁴ It seems as though at this point the Methodists had become either disillusioned or discouraged about the prospects of church union. Up to this point, no concrete result of the negotiations could be shown.

The non-Anglicans increasingly felt as though union meant a merger of other denominations into the Anglican Communion.⁴⁵ Their

⁴¹Cole, p. 11.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Minutes of Representative and Pastoral sessions of District Synod, 1934, p. 16, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

⁴⁵Capon, p. 53.

anxieties were demonstrated by a letter in the public newspaper, East African Standard, which pointed out that each participating body hoped to keep everything that was of value in the proposed Union.⁴⁶

During 1934 the committee continued to study the proposals of the Church of South India; it also prepared a new liturgy for the Alliance High School, incorporating Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist liturgies.⁴⁷ At the end of 1934, the Rev. Mr. Norman Miller, a CMS Chaplain in Mombasa, led a United Churches' Mission in Nairobi. Many people attended the meetings, and this was a sign that cooperation within the mission context was not only desirable but possible.⁴⁸ It became obvious that, left to themselves, Christians at the grass roots level would cooperate more easily than their leaders at the top.⁴⁹ After the efforts to secure a basis of union had failed, it was deemed appropriate to organize a Conference on Christian Cooperation which would make it possible for churches to begin dialogue with each other with a hope of achieving a common agreement necessary to form the basis of union.⁵⁰ A proposal for a Christian Council was carefully examined. The Rev. Mr. R.G.M. Calderwood, a Church of Scotland Minister and the first Chairman of the Council, doubted whether many Europeans in Kenya were prepared to work with Africans in the Council. The Race Relations Committee was formed in order to find ways and means of making it possible for different races in Kenya, Africans and Europeans, to work together.⁵¹

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 54.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Cole, p. 12.

⁵¹Capon, p. 72.

After the perusal of Church Union documents in 1939 by the Continuation Committee, it became evident that one of the great weaknesses of the Alliance in dealing with church union was the attitude of one of its major partners; the Africa Inland Mission had made it clear in 1922 that it could not envisage corporate union with other churches which by their standards revealed that they were not explicitly committed to certain theological standards for which the A.I.M. stood.⁵² Such standards included an explicit requirement for total abstinence from alcohol as a condition for baptism. This attitude had been reaffirmed in 1933-1934 when the A.I.M. had declined to join the Church Union Committee. At the same time, the A.I.M. had reiterated its desire to work for cooperation with vigour and earnestness.⁵³

As a result, the Continuation Committee found it expedient to call a representative meeting of cooperating churches to see what further steps could be taken to revive the ongoing debate.⁵⁴ A criticism was levelled by Calderwood against African Church leaders for showing little enthusiasm for union, and for getting "more and more comfortably 'settled on their lees', and so accustomed to their own ways of doing things that they hesitate to face the perplexities and problems that a United Church would involve."⁵⁵ The missionaries cited the increase of

⁵²R.G.M. Calderwood, "A Note on Church Union and Questions Regarding Unity and Cooperation among Christians in Kenya Colony," September 1939, p. 1, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 2.

⁵⁵Ibid.

schismatic (independent) churches as proof that African Christians lacked any strong "Church" sense that would involve them in a search for unity.⁵⁶ They ignored the fact that African Christians still looked to European missionaries for leadership, and the responsibility for making such involved decisions was exclusively in Europeans' hands.⁵⁷ Mr. Calderwood admitted that at no time since 1918 had African churches been invited to take part in the debate, nor were they ever asked to endorse decisions that were made by missionary committees.⁵⁸

The state of affairs concerning the proposed union continued to lie in abeyance, the only excuse being that the development of the negotiations for Church unity in South India were being awaited.⁵⁹ It was increasingly felt that unnecessary procrastination endangered the ground already gained as manifested in the cooperation on evangelistic activities. The inspiration of the early days was being lost, since old faces were being replaced by new ones, some of whom were indifferent to the union movement.⁶⁰

Even though there was a strong feeling within the churches that concrete steps towards unity were essential if the momentum of the cooperation envisaged earlier was to be maintained, the intervention of World War II postponed all endeavours to hold meetings. The Kenya Missionary Council (K.M.C.) was given the task of making a decision concerning the work of the German Neukirchen Mission among the Pokomo

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 3.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 2.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

people on the Tana River which had been interrupted by the war.⁶¹ In 1940 a decision was made that everything possible would be done to help the work during the war. Although eventually this work would be given over to the Methodists, the Kenya Missionary Council now took the responsibility of arranging for missionaries of different societies to give pastoral oversight over the area for a given length of time.⁶² During the 1942 Annual Meeting which was chaired by the Rev. A. J. Hopkins, the Superintendent of the Methodist Mission, a resolution was passed that the time was ripe for the formation of the Christian Council.⁶³ Some members wished to see the continuation of the Missionary Council alongside the Christian Council, but this was viewed by other members as an impediment to the process of Church unity. In view of this difference of opinion, the Methodist Synod of 1943 passed a resolution which said:

The Methodist Missionary Society is grateful for the high ideals of missionary cooperation fostered and developed by the Kenya Missionary Council for many years, and places on record its deep appreciation of the advantage it has received from this co-operation, and for the fellowship and understanding which has sustained the council.

As the spirit grows, a larger and more adaptive body is required through which the growing spirit may express itself . . .

It therefore gives notice that at the next Annual meeting of the Kenya Missionary Council, the Methodist Missionary Society must attach itself to the Christian Council of Kenya, believing that through it, Christian ideas may find expression fitted to the present needs of this Colony more completely than can now be obtained through the Kenya Missionary Council.⁶⁴

⁶¹Capon, p. 45.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Kenya District Synod Minutes, 1943.

Even though such a resolution was passed, not all Churches were in favour of such a proposal. After the 1943 meeting, the Kenya Missionary Council continued to function alongside the Christian Council. This dilemma was somewhat softened when the Rev. M. G. Capon was appointed honorary secretary of both organizations.⁶⁵ In 1944 the resolution to wind up the affairs of the Missionary Council was supported by an overwhelming majority. From then onwards the Christian Council took over the business of the Kenya Missionary Council, thereby becoming the organ of the Protestant Churches in Kenya.⁶⁶

It should be pointed out that during its initial stages in 1943, the new Council had to come to terms with a difficult problem. There were some in the Council who thought that the Roman Catholic bodies in Kenya ought to be asked to join. It was argued that a body that bore such a comprehensive title as The Christian Council of Kenya ought to include one of the largest Christian bodies in the country.⁶⁷ Some of the more conservative groups such as the Africa Inland Mission felt that they could not take part in the formation of the council.⁶⁸ They strongly felt that they could not cooperate with a body that was wooing the Church of Rome. Association with Roman Catholics was repugnant to their churchmanship.⁶⁹ To preserve peace and unity, it

⁶⁵Capon, p. 46. All participating Churches; A.I.M., Friends, Anglican, Methodists, Presbyterians continued to support both organizations.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Capon, p. 75.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 76.

⁶⁹Ibid.

was decided that the time was not ripe for the inclusion of the Roman Catholic Church into the membership of the Council. According to the Council's constitution, the objective was defined as:

To promote the extension of the Kingdom of God among all races in Kenya, by fostering cooperation and mutual consultation among all Christians in the colony.⁷⁰

Even though the Christian Council continued to symbolize the cooperation that was envisaged by the churches, it left much to be desired. There have been many obstacles on the road to unity even since the inception of the Christian Council. There have been instances where Christians have demonstrated their "suspicious and distrustful" spirit to each other, most often on doctrinal grounds. When the Rev. R. Elliott Kendall, then Chairman of the Methodist Church in Kenya, made an opening address on "the Role of the Churches in Independent Kenya" in 1964, he said:

God's call to the Churches today is for unity. Many Christians believe that God's will for us today is that we should seek earnestly the union of the Churches. There are many unfortunate results of denominationalism, and it will take generations for these to be removed, even after re-union is achieved.⁷¹

This was not mere pessimism but pragmatism. Mr. Kendall went on to point out that missionaries were among the chief causes of perpetuating denominationalism. He saw the fear of confusing unity with uniformity.⁷² The mission of the Church suffered at the hands of

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 75.

⁷¹"The Churches' Role in Kenya," A report of the Conference on the Role of the Churches in Independent Kenya, organized by the Christian Council of Kenya, Jan. 28-31, 1964, Limuru, p. 10.

⁷²Ibid., p. 11.

division. For this reason, "denominationalism underlines the foreignness of Christianity in Kenya."⁷³

COOPERATION IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The CMS had transferred its Divinity School, founded in 1903 at Freretown, to Limuru in 1930. In 1946 plans were made to transfer the Divinity School from Limuru to a site which was closer to Nairobi.⁷⁴ Canon Capon, who was the principal at the time, proposed that the issue of joint theological training should be raised once again. His Bishop did not agree with him, and when more land was acquired for the Divinity School, it remained at Limuru.

Discussions concerning the possibility of joint theological training resumed in 1948, and in 1949 it was agreed that there be a period of experimental cooperation for five years to test its feasibility.⁷⁵ At the end of that time, a constitution was drawn up inaugurating St. Paul's United Theological College. The change of name became effective from January 1, 1955.⁷⁶ The new constitution of the college was formally ratified by the college council on 5 July, 1957.

The college continued to train ministers for Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. The Reformed Church joined the college as a full participant much later on.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Cole, p. 12.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 13.

⁷⁶Ibid.

The year 1960 saw the foundation of the Association of East African Theological Colleges.⁷⁷ At first it was a cooperation of the Protestant colleges from the three East African countries, but later on Roman Catholic institutions joined as well. In 1965 the Association instituted the Diploma in Theology of Makerere University.⁷⁸ The Association has widened its scope to include the publication of text books in Kiswahili for use in the colleges. The programme, which was initially supported by grants from the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches, is by now self-supporting.⁷⁹ In recent times, the Association which now is comprised of thirteen institutions, three of them Roman Catholic, has inaugurated a degree programme as an effort to upgrade and diversify theological education in Eastern Africa.

IS UNITY POSSIBLE?

This is meant to be a question rather than an answer. From the beginning, the road to unity has encountered insurmountable difficulties. Churches have been so concerned about their survival as denominations that the spirit of unity has been quenched somewhere in the middle of the road. This was the position in the 50's and churches

⁷⁷W. B. Anderson, The Church in East Africa, 1840-1974 (Dodoma: Tanganyika Press, 1977), p. 172.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid.

kept on asking, "What are we to do now?"⁸⁰

Since 1958, churches in Kenya and Tanzania have felt a need to come together for an exchange of information on approaches to possible union. Informal discussions were held separately in both Tanzania and Kenya, and resolutions supporting church union have been passed by various churches and the two Christian Councils.⁸¹ In 1959 the several Lutheran Churches in Tanzania formed a federation as an initial step in creating one Church. The new Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania was duly inaugurated in June 1963.⁸²

Wider efforts for unity had been started in East Africa on an unofficial basis by Anglicans, Presbyterians and Methodists, who worked on a draft scheme of union. In 1961 official contact was made at a meeting held at Dodoma, Tanzania. During the same year similar efforts were made in Kenya, especially on the initiative of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches.⁸³ It was seen desirable to invite representatives of all Churches from both countries to a Conference on Unity.

In July 1962 a conference on "The Quest for Christian Unity" was held in Limuru. A statement which was made and addressed to the

⁸⁰Macpherson to Rev. Henrik Smedjebacks, August 14, 1963. Macpherson, a former Presbyterian Moderator, and a one-time General Secretary was an honorary and a part-time secretary to Church Union Negotiations' Committee from 1963-1967.

⁸¹Elliot Kendall, "Church Union Negotiations, Kenya-Tanganyika," Nov. 1963, Methodist ARchives, Nairobi.

⁸²"Church Union Negotiations, Kenya-Tanganyika" Nov. 1963, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

⁸³Ibid.

Christians of Kenya and Tanzania proposed continued negotiations for unity and agreed to the formation of a Working Committee of the five negotiating Churches, namely, Anglican, Evangelical Lutheran, Methodist, Moravian and Presbyterian Churches.⁸⁴ A "theological confrontation" which was held in Arusha in 1963 was attended by delegates from the participating churches, including observers from the Anglican Province of Uganda, the Roman Catholic Church, the Baptist Churches and the Mennonite Church in Tanzania. Matters concerning creeds, the church, ministry, and the sacraments were discussed and special committees were set up for continuation.⁸⁵

The 1965 Conference at Dodoma, Tanzania was, perhaps, a hall-mark in the development of the East African Church Union Consultation. An "Interim Basis of Union" was produced in the meeting.⁸⁶ It was proposed that Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches should proceed to negotiate a scheme of union since the Lutheran and Moravian Churches could not proceed with the laid-down basis of union.⁸⁷ According to Elliot Kendall, the Lutheran refusal to go ahead with negotiations "was being guided by people from overseas."⁸⁸ The request of the Moravians for a delay was not well defined and appeared to

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ecumenical Review, XX:3 (July 1968), 267.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Elliot Kendall, "Limited Success at Dodoma," (mimeographed notes), p. 2, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

indicate "reluctance to move forward without the Lutherans."⁸⁹ According to Macpherson, a root cause of the failure was the wide spectrum of belief on the significance accorded to the historic episcopate. While the Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian and Moravian Churches assented to the historic episcopate as defined by the Lambeth Quadrilateral of the Anglican Church, the Lutheran Church held to the view that "succession in the episcopate had no significance."⁹⁰ Other difficulties which were encountered included the conceptions and practices of high and low churchmanship, those of conservative and liberal theology, and the relationship of regional unity to catholicity and to world-wide confessionalism.⁹¹

It was agreed that those churches which had subscribed to the "Basis of Union" (Methodist, Presbyterian and Anglican Churches) proceed with active negotiations while maintaining a covenant relationship with the Lutheran and Moravian Churches.⁹² This was not the end of the story, however, since the Anglican Church was unable to endorse the findings of the Dodoma Conference on the future of the consultation. Its Provincial Synod which met in August 1966 considered that it was necessary for all five churches to "move forward together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit rather than at this stage giving immediate

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Robert Macpherson, "The Dodoma Conference," 1965, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid.

consideration to the possibility of the union of the three Churches only."⁹³ The Synod also turned down proposals for establishing a Federation of East African Churches.⁹⁴

It was found necessary for the negotiating committee to meet again in February 1967 to consider the views that were pondered by the churches. It was agreed that it would be appropriate to abandon the "Interim Basis of Union" produced at Dodoma and attempt to seek a basis of union which would be acceptable to all five churches. The task was entrusted to a Committee of Liturgy and Doctrine which held a preliminary meeting in September 1967.⁹⁵

A second meeting of the Liturgy and Doctrine Committee held in January 1968 completed a draft of a proposed catechism for experimentation in the churches. There is no evidence to show that this document was used by any church. Meanwhile a further development occurred when the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church passed a resolution requiring the five churches to covenant together to unite by Easter Day, 1972.⁹⁶ This, however, did not come to any fruition, and the churches did not react favourably to set a date for the consummation of unity.⁹⁷

⁹³Ecumenical Review, XX:3 (July 1968), 267.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶John Gatu, General Secretary of P.C.E.A. to Rev. R. S. Mng'ong'o President of the Methodist Church in Kenya, 4th July, 1967. Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

⁹⁷Leonard Beecher, the Archbishop of East Africa, to Rev. Gatu, 5th October 1967, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

Representatives of the negotiating committee met again on 29th July in Nairobi under the Chairmanship of the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Crispus Kiongo. The outstanding accomplishment of this meeting was the finalization of a short common catechism of Christian teaching for baptismal instruction and confirmation.⁹⁸ From that point onwards, there is no evidence of an important representative committee held to discuss church union matters. It seems as though the earlier difficulties overturned the efforts made to capture the spirit of 1913. The evidence so far received does not point to any insatiable desire on the part of the churches to work towards unity at the expense of confessional loyalty.

A more recent effort to revive church union negotiations on a territorial basis (Kenya) was not very successful. The first meeting was held on June 30, 1975 representing the Church of the Province of Kenya (Anglican), Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Methodist Church in Kenya and African Christian Church and Schools.⁹⁹ A Roman Catholic observer was present, and it was strongly felt that more representation from African indigenous Churches was desirable.¹⁰⁰ Even though a second meeting was held the following year, no marked progress was made.

⁹⁸ Church Union Committee, Press release, August 1, 1969, Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

⁹⁹ Minutes of the Consultation Committee on Church Union, June 30, 1975.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

It seems as though the effort was not fruitful and no follow-up meetings were arranged. Lack of a part- or full-time Church Union Secretariat has been a major drawback of the negotiations committee. There is lack of continuity since volunteer officials change from time to time, thus making it difficult to maintain an unbroken chain of recommendations, resolutions, and points of agreement.

A SYNOPSIS

We have seen how the road to unity and ecumenism has been full of hazards, misunderstandings, rivalry and human frailty. The key to the whole unity endeavour was a common forum at which common practical problems confronting churches could be discussed, as was the case with the first Missionary Conference of 1908. The 1913 Conference was a more representative conference with the same aims, but looking towards a federation. The need for working together with a common aim was felt; hence the 1918 conference conceived the idea of forming the Alliance of Missions in Kenya. The search for unity revealed that there was growing impatience with the perpetuation of divisions that had roots in European or American history but that had little relevance to churches in Kenya. Movements like the Revival Fellowships in East Africa revealed that ordinary Christians were desiring visible unity and were free to exercise this unity in their meetings and fellowships.

When the church union negotiations were begun on a regional basis (East Africa), it was envisaged that they would encompass a wider area and therefore, make union more meaningful. The parochial nature

of the churches was always prevalent, even though many hoped that churches would rise above denominational considerations.¹⁰¹

In the beginning, there were no Africans involved because the leadership of churches was still in the hands of expatriates. The expatriate missionaries wanted to leave behind a united church as a way of removing the scandal of divisions which they were party to. In the latter part of the negotiations in the 1960's, the expatriates were in a hurry to conclude the negotiations, while African leaders were more cautious.¹⁰² There was a tendency to overlook obvious differences and traditional animosity. Non-theological factors were coated with theological reasons.¹⁰³ It had first been felt that when the expatriates left, Africans would automatically unite. Many Africans believed that if left to themselves, they would easily overcome differences. This was not the case. African church leaders were keen to hold on to their positions and were not to be hurried on a somewhat obscure and uncertain future.¹⁰⁴

Over the years, evangelical Protestants have been suspicious of ecumenism, believing that it involves compromise with false types of Christianity.¹⁰⁵ Independent Churches in Kenya have tended to keep

¹⁰¹Interview with the Rev. Johana Mbogori, former chairman of Church Union Negotiations Committee, 1965-72, on May 9, 1979.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Anderson, p. 172.

aloof from the "Mission Churches". Some of them have disapproved of N.C.C.K., even though a number of them are members of the N.C.C.K. The International Council of Christian Churches, led by Carl McIntyre, in direct opposition to the World Council of Churches, has formed the East African Christian Alliance.¹⁰⁶ This alliance has not only drawn large independent churches like the Church of Christ in Africa, but small groups have been attracted by its supposedly firm stand on loyalty to the Bible, literally interpreted, as the Word of God.¹⁰⁷

In recent years, the mainstream churches have demonstrated a desire for a united witness by working together toward a joint religious-education curriculum for both primary and secondary schools. Protestants and Roman Catholics have tended to ignore their differences so that they can make their cooperation in educational work manifest. Another area of cooperation is in the Bible Society. The Kenya Bible Society has encouraged Protestants and Roman Catholics to have a co-translation of scriptures.¹⁰⁸

Mr. Mbogori, a one-time Chairman of the Church Union Negotiations Committee, strongly feels that organic unity has been delayed indefinitely because of the churches' ownership of properties. Churches become entrenched in their own traditions because of the fear that larger groups will swallow smaller ones, or larger groups suspiciously feel that small groups are envious of their wealth.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Interview with Rev. Johana Mbogori, May 9, 1979.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

The history of ecumenism and church unity in Kenya reveals that traditions and biases are difficult to transcend. Churches have been helped to realize that to allow unnecessary differences to colour their relationships is tantamount to strangling evangelistic spirit. Another lesson learned is that:

Closer cooperation will come not only by Conferences and Committees and constitutions, but by the pressure of popular opinion of spirit-filled people. There are the wider, non-theological factors which are so important. Personal prejudice, pride of the past, ambition for positions of responsibility, these are the things which will keep the ministries of the Churches divided; apathy, lack of understanding and knowledge, and sentiment, there are the obstacles which confront the laity.¹¹⁰

The Methodist Church has cooperated with other churches in seeking ways and means of achieving greater unity of the Church. Since 1913, the Methodists have been involved at every stage during the consultations concerning cooperation and unity. The Rev. Mr. Worthington, the pioneer missionary to Meru, was the secretary of the first committee formed by the alliance for the purpose of fostering the spirit of co-operation among the member Churches. At later stages, both the Rev. Mr. Kendall and the Rev. Mr. Mbogori have been chairmen of the East African Church Union Negotiating Committee at different times.

One of the reasons why the Methodist Church avoided working in towns until recently was fear of friction and competition with other churches. The Methodists cherished a hope that somehow the United Church was just about to be inaugurated. This hope has been dashed

¹¹⁰Cole, p. 15.

against the wall, leaving behind some disappointments which are hard to erase.¹¹¹

¹¹¹Interview with Stephen Kiome, June 8, 1979. Mr. Kiome is a leading Methodist lay preacher and the editor of a church newsletter, Pamoja.

TABLE 14

A TABLE SHOWING THE STORY OF CHURCH COOPERATION IN KENYA

1908 - 9	Two local Nyanza Conferences.
1910	General Committee of Missionaries. Findings of the Committee on Federation were sent to missionaries. Committee at home for consideration.
1911	General Committee of Missionaries. No clear step taken.
1913	United Missionary Conference--Kikuyu. The basis of federation was accepted. Opposition from Frank Weston, Bishop of Zanzibar, on the questions about episcopacy and the ministry.
1915	Lambeth Committee advises Archbishop of Canterbury on Kikuyu Conference 1913, a pamphlet "Kikuyu 1913" was produced.
1918	United Conference of Missionary Societies--Formation of an Alliance of Missionary Societies and a Representative Council of the Alliance.
1922	United Conference of Missionary Societies--suggestions: future ordination of all African clergy to be done by all cooperating Churches. This suggestion was turned down by Anglican home authorities.
1924	Kenya Missionary Council formed.
1926	Last Kikuyu Conference. The Inauguration of the Alliance High School situated at Kikuyu.
1930	CMS Divinity School moved from Freretown to Limuru.
1933	Scheme of Church Union. Proposed Basis of Union produced, with episcopacy recommended.
1943	Christian Council of Kenya formed.

- 1955 Inauguration of St. Paul's United Theological College.
- 1956 Closer cooperation of Presbyterian Church and the Methodist Church. Union between Presbyterian Church of East Africa and the Church of Scotland Overseas Presbytery of Kenya.
Bahati joint Methodist/Presbyterian Community Center started.
- 1960 Lavington United Church (Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian) formed in Nairobi.
- 1962 Inauguration of East African Church Union negotiations comprised of five Churches: Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Moravian at Dodoma, Tanzania.
- 1966 A United Liturgy for East Africa was produced.
- 1968 A United Catechism for East Africa was produced.

Sources: Cole, p. 17-18.

Methodist Archives, Nairobi in the file marked "Church Union papers, letters and papers."

Chapter IX

CONCLUSION

Looking in retrospect at the history of the Methodist Church in Kenya, we shall become aware of the impact of the missionary movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries upon African societies. It is the same story repeated in many parts of the continent of Africa. European and American missionaries brought with them not only the gospel but also the scandal of denominational competition characterizing their home countries. The people of the United Methodist Free Church came to Kenya as a branch of British Methodism. They drew their resources of personnel and funds from a relatively smaller group of people, with more parochial constitution and outlook; hence their inability to expand as other early societies such as CMS did. The marked growth of the Methodist Church became possible after the Unions of 1907 and 1932 respectively, when resources could be sought within a larger group of adherents. This increased tremendously the prospects of expansion into the interior.

The question that has to be answered is what made Africans who had a religion of their own respond to the gospel in the manner they did, while what was presented to them was not only foreign but repugnant to their long held customs. Perhaps part of the answer will be found in the role the church played in education. Education was used as an evangelistic "bait" to lure people to the church. Africans were known to have an insatiable desire to know how to read and write.

It was part of the white man's magic that was functional in the everyday activities. As the Rev. Mr. Hopkins observed, no person could "be quite the same after being in school for any length of time. Many may fall back into the old ways, of course, but there is a questioning, a doubt in the mind."¹ Education increased the stress between the new and the old. The village school acted as the center where new movements and ideas originated. It was in the school that old superstitions could be overcome, giving a good chance of planting new ideas which gave birth to enlightenment. The village schools were more than village academies for the teaching of the alphabet. They were, to use Hopkins' words, "lethal chambers in which senile customs perish painlessly."²

Education was thus one of the weapons used in breaking the African resistance to Christianity. Since education was offered initially by the church bodies, inevitably many of those who were willing to read and write would not refuse worship, devotions and other "trappings" that went with literacy. The Methodist synod of 1946 expressed its belief that:

the good of Africa can be served only by preserving its education from materialism by giving to it a religious basis and providing it with religious content The synod therefore believes that government will perceive the need for, and will provide adequate safeguards that, Christian values be preserved throughout the whole of the educational services at the disposal of the African community.³

¹Kenya District Annual Report, 1940.

²Ibid.

³Resolution of the Annual Synod of the Methodist Church in Kenya in respect of state Education. Synod reports, 1946.

Another aspect of the missionary work that seemed attractive to the African was the medical work. Persons who would not have visited a mission station willingly found themselves at the doors of the church in an attempt to obtain drugs which would alleviate their physical suffering. During the process of obtaining medication, the gospel would be presented to them. A few had the opportunity of being led to accept the Christian faith as a result of their frequent visits to mission medical centers. The gospel was eventually planted in an indirect way.

If we look at Kenyan Christianity from the perspective of the missionary movement from Europe, we shall see that events were shaping the life and raison d'etre of the African Church. The freed-slave settlements at the coast, the political struggles of the Arabs, the shock of an alien culture that threatened the existence of cultural ties that bound communities together, cultural nationalism that was confused with political expediency were but mere preliminaries to the planting of an indigenous church. From the very beginning local catechists acted as intermediaries between the missionaries and local communities. They interpreted the Christian message to suit local expectations, in thought-forms that were readily understood by the people. They ensured the continuity of the missionary endeavour even when European missionaries had to go on furlough. Within the Methodist Church in particular, catechists and evangelists were extremely few in number and resided at a central station. Owing to communication difficulties, catechists were often left on their own to do what they

deemed appropriate, within the laid-down guidelines and procedures. The highest growth of the Methodist Church was recorded in the decade between 1950 and 1960. This was the time when there were more African ministers and evangelists than in any previous period. It was also the time of the Mau Mau nationalist insurrection when many people felt insecure on their own and needed the Church, the only institution that seemed to stand firm without wavering.

The rise of an African clergy and the prominence of African leadership moved the missionaries into a rather secondary role. It was felt that the time had come to place the Methodist Church in the hands of indigenous leadership. This was done by allowing missionary domination to wither away, leaving the church firmly in the hands of the indigenous leaders. Through this process the Methodist Church in Kenya became an autonomous body.

AUTONOMY

The Methodist Church in Kenya became autonomous in January, 1957. This was not the end of the missionary era but the handing over of the responsibility of the church to the African leadership. Up until this time, the missionaries had been entrusted with the affairs of the African church. Since the church was in the hands of foreign missionaries, it was mistaken as a foreign institution. It was soon discovered that the church could not really become itself and achieve the necessary self-confidence until it had a greater measure of African leadership.

The first president of the autonomous conference, the Rev. Ronald Mng'ong'o, held office from 1967 to 1970, consolidating the work of the new conference. It was not an easy task for African leaders. The Rev. Lawi Imathiu was then the Secretary of the conference and is presently the Presiding Bishop.⁴ African leadership was often inhibited by the forcefulness of the Europeans.⁵ Their loquaciousness, their domineering personalities, and their self-assertiveness hindered the development of the African potential in leadership.

The autonomous church was able to forge ahead and make its influence felt beyond the community of churchgoers. Efforts at indigenization of the life of the church, especially in worship, were made, marking a change in the church's attitude toward African culture.⁶ Ordinary Christians felt that the responsibility of running their church had been placed squarely upon their shoulders. There was a renewed enthusiasm for evangelism and outreach as well as the erection of new sanctuaries. This initiative and drive helped congregations to rely more on themselves than on outside assistance.

⁴The term "President" which referred to the head of the Methodist Church in Kenya was changed to "Presiding Bishop" in 1973 as a result of the government's ruling that the term "President" was to be restricted only to the Head of State.

⁵Interview with Lawi Imathiu, the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church in Kenya, November 22nd, 1978.

⁶Interview with Stephen Kiome, June 8th, 1979.

The Methodist Church felt constrained to start missions for evangelistic outreach. The North Kenya mission, a mission among a predominantly Moslem population, was begun in 1968 with the initiative of Lawi Imathiu. Even though it was a difficult area, the churches have sustained this work up to the present day. The Kisii Mission in Western Kenya was inaugurated in 1972 as a second mission area. All this was the direct outcome of the spirit of autonomy, a realization that the local church has the responsibility of becoming self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing.

Being autonomous meant achieving a good measure of self-reliance. This did not necessarily mean becoming self-sufficient. Since human beings have been created in such a way that they find fulfillment in relationships, the Methodist Church in Kenya felt that it must continue to relate and share its mission with other churches around the globe. Since in the past the relationship between the church in Kenya and the church in Great Britain had been that of child and parent, a new relationship had to be established. Such a relationship had to be built upon mutual understanding, participation and partnership. This became a fraternal relationship of two equal partners who wished to share in the missionary endeavour and at the same time preserve their own idiosyncrasies.

In a developing country, the church has a very vital role to play in the total national effort to provide services for the people in the whole community. The church has acted as a pioneer in different aspects of community service. Such institutions as the village polytechnics which were designed to be vocational training centers were

pioneered by the church beginning from the mid-60's. In the field of community health the church has played its role with seriousness, even when scarcity of trained personnel and resources has threatened termination of such important parts of the total ministry of the church. The church has also been involved in ecumenical social service projects such as Bahati Community Center.

MORATORIUM

Over the last decade a cry has been heard from African Churches, calling for a "moratorium." What the term means as presently used is that there should be a halt of both missionaries and money from overseas donors for a certain number of years. This would give the African Church time to rethink the whole question of personnel, finances and structures of the African Church. From the position of strength, the church would then be able to formulate new guidelines and procedures under which missionaries from outside Africa should operate.

The appeal was powerfully put forward by the Rev. Mr. John Gatu in 1971 when he was the General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church for East Africa. He is presently the Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly. His call for "moratorium" aroused both consternation and confusion in European and North American missionary circles, but also sympathetic understanding. John Gatu's lead was followed by the A.A.C.C. Assembly at Lusaka in 1974. During this assembly the A.A.C.C. resolved that:

To enable the African Church to achieve the power of becoming a true instrument of liberating and reconciling the African people, as well as finding solutions to economic and social dependency,

our option as a matter of policy has to be a Moratorium on external assistance in money and personnel. We recommend this option as the only potent means of becoming truly and authentically ourselves while remaining a respected and responsible part of the Universal Church.⁷

In its call for "Moratorium", the A.A.C.C. was calling upon churches to exercise self-restraint in requesting help from overseas. The emphasis was placed upon self-reliance. By exploring new ways of doing mission, it was anticipated that the African Church would in the long run be able to regain its dignity, pride and confidence that it lacked. The African Independent Churches had shown that churches in Africa do not necessarily need either personnel or money from overseas in order to grow. In most of these churches, help from abroad has always been either nil or very little. The mission-founded churches, on the other hand, have depended on overseas assistance. At times, such help, though given with the best of intention, has made these churches self-complacent. It is against this background that the A.A.C.C. was endeavouring to promote moratorium in its member churches.

Not all churches acted in the same manner. In the 1974 Conference, the Methodist Church in Kenya put forward its own understanding of moratorium as follows:

The interpretation of the Methodist Church in Kenya on moratorium is not "missionary go home" but "Jitegemee" (self-reliance). . . What we understand by the word "moratorium" is that the church must be fully planted in the Kenya soil.⁸

⁷Adrian Hastings, African Christianity (London: Chapman, 1976), p. 22.

⁸Minutes of the 9th Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Kenya, August 1974, p. 34.

The Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church in Kenya, the Rev. Mr. Lawi Imathiu, elaborated the church's understanding of "moratorium" by identifying the greatest need of the church to be men and women who are equipped to communicate their faith more adequately.⁹ According to Bishop Imathiu, missionaries who work in the Methodist Church in Kenya are not imposed on the church but have been invited to share in the "abundant harvest". Indeed it is the essence of the Christian Church to be not only catholic but universal, hence the need to have a diversified ministry.¹⁰

The annual general meeting of the National Christian Council of Kenya of July, 1974 considered the implication of the term "moratorium" for its member churches. It was felt that it was important for churches in Africa to rethink their historical relationship with churches in Europe and America. In an attempt to offer acceptable definition of "moratorium", the General Assembly of the National Christian Council stipulated that the word "moratorium" meant that:

The church in Africa (and generally in the third world) be given time to rethink of the problems, successes and failures as a way of initiating and developing new strategies for the mission of the church, without undue pressure. The idea of a moratorium would force the churches in the developing countries to become less dependent and get started on the road to self-reliance.¹¹

The call for "moratorium" has come through with different price-tags according to the school of thought of the exponents. It has,

⁹Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁰Interview with Bishop Imathiu, August 22, 1975.

¹¹Conference minutes, August 1974, p. 68.

however, been identified with one common aim, that is, to make churches in Africa self-reliant and less dependent on outside assistance. It has helped to arouse great interest in authenticity and indigenization of theology in Africa.

African theology has become fashionable. It has become clear to many Christians in Africa that there ought to be a bias in theology that tilts towards meeting the needs of African philosophy and its cultural milieu. This does not mean that African theology should be done only by Africans, but it emphasizes the need to take seriously the African context and situation in order to arrive at a relevant and meaningful discourse. African Christians have shown deep love for Christians from other parts of the world, and it is appropriate for the church in Kenya to continue to invite other Christians from any part of the world to share in the church's ongoing concern on evangelization.

THE UNFINISHED TASK

The Rev. Mr. Hopkins by 1930 had a clear vision on how to present the Christian gospel to the African. He wrote:

One of the great contributions that the Christian missionary may make to Africa is to reveal the truths that lie hidden in their own beliefs and customs, and to show how these find their perfect fulfillment only in Jesus.¹²

This was a realization that the true Christian gospel must encompass everything in the African environment that can be made to accord with the mind of Christ. A study of African religions and

¹²A. J. Hopkins, Trail Blazers and Road Makers (London: Hooks, n.d.), p. 140.

philosophy has been undertaken with great enthusiasm by churches in Africa. The Methodist Church in Kenya has not been idle in this respect.

Papers such as "Christian Education in Africa Today" and "African Christian Theology" have been written and presented to the Conference.¹³ Such an attempt to make Christianity indigenous to Africans is an ongoing concern, and much more endeavour needs to be taken in this venture. The hope of the church lies on the emerging African theologians who would be willing to undertake this exercise and take an active role in the creation of an indigenous African theology which would speak more meaningfully to the person at the grass roots.

In his address to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa on 24th April, 1973, the Hon. Charles Njonjo, the Attorney General of Kenya, had this to say concerning missionaries:

These early missionaries were men and women who left the comfort and security of their homes and their jobs and came out in faith to the unknown, inspired by the vision that God's love was for all the world not merely for Europe. We dare not forget what we owe to them.¹⁴

These early missionaries had their strengths as well as their weaknesses. They were, after all, humans who were bound to make mistakes. They had, however, an untiring desire to communicate the truth of the gospel as they understood it to all those who dared to listen to them.

¹³Minutes of the Annual Conference, August 1974, p. 91-98.

¹⁴Minutes of the Annual Conference, August 1973, p. 87.

Some of their church regulations and polity have changed as a result of the autonomy acquired by African churches; other things, for example, liturgy and worship, have not changed as yet. In 1916, for example, the Rev. Mr. R. T. Worthington, the pioneer of the Methodist Meru Mission, presented the order of morning Sunday worship as follows:¹⁵

1. Hymn
2. General Confession
3. Absolution
4. Lord's prayer
5. Apostles Creed
6. Lessons
7. Hymn
8. Prayer (Petition and Intercession)
9. Address (Sermon)
10. Collection
11. Hymn
12. Benediction

Even though Worthington commented that there was no objection to the alteration of such an order, other than its general familiarity, it has been in use almost intact until this day.

African converts to Christianity perpetuated the practices and customs that were handed over to them by the missionaries. Because of

¹⁵R. T. Worthington, "A Church Record and Register" (handwritten notes), 21st August, 1916.

restriction on what was allowed in the church, they could not be expected to be innovative. This is partly the reason why we do not have documented evidence that African evangelists were more successful than the European missionaries in winning converts, even though they formed the backbone of grass roots evangelism.

By becoming autonomous early in 1967, the Methodist Church in Kenya had opened a new chapter in its history. The Church had thus acquired its African identity in both personnel and outlook. One thing, however, was clear. The Church which had been planted by European missionaries, often in shaky and turbulent conditions, had taken root and now had the imprint "made in Africa".

The Methodist Church in Kenya is numerically smaller in comparison with Methodist Churches in other African countries. It serves a smaller area than other major denominations in Kenya. This can be partly explained historically in that, until the beginning of this century, the Methodist Church in Kenya was supported by the smallest branch of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, the United Methodist Free Churches. It was not until 1932 that support came from united Methodism in Britain.

The long period of the church's work at the coast in the nineteenth century was very demanding on the lives of the missionaries and their dependents. The graves at Ribe tell a tale of the conditions at the coast during this period. When the Methodist Church moved up-country, it did not go to the heavily populated areas of Kenya but to a place of limited size. It avoided the urban areas on grounds of comity, since other allied missions were already established there.

Notwithstanding the hindrances which have been noted, the Methodist Church has grown steadily within the last one hundred and eighteen years. This is due to its evangelistic zeal, concern for lay involvement in the church's life in every aspect, endeavours to build up a strong and enlightened ministry, and involvement in ecumenical affairs. Lay preachers occupy eighty percent of the pulpits every Sunday and share in the government of the church from the grass-root level to the conference level.

Unfortunately it took missionaries quite a long time to realize that the indigenous Christians could take care of their own church. Some of them even in the 1930's still talked about Africans living in the "Middle Ages".¹⁶ The Rev. Mr. Hopkins lamented the fact that Methodists were so far behind other missions in the creation of a responsible indigenous church.¹⁷ He gave examples of the Presbyterian Church having succeeded in putting Africans in responsible positions in the church. The failure of the Methodists to do so created friction between the missionaries and their African counterparts, thereby retarding the growth of the church at the grassroots.¹⁸ Hopkins reports that Africans were aware that they were doing the bulk of evangelistic and educational work, but were neither accorded recognition nor given a free hand to be innovative.¹⁹

¹⁶A. J. Hopkins, "The Indigenous Church", mimeographed notes, August 1946, p. 7. Methodist Archives, Nairobi.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 5.

Quite apart from these setbacks, the church took a holistic attitude in its evangelism. The school became the nucleus from which church membership grew. The hospital was likewise a reflection of the Church's total mission. The teacher, the evangelist and the nurse saw themselves as performing the same task, namely, that of bringing people to Christ. Whatever weaknesses missionaries had, one thing was certain. They demonstrated through their sacrificial living that the central theme of their ethos was love. The founding of the Christian institutions was not an end in itself. The major objective was the extension of the kingdom of love as demonstrated by the life and work of Christ.

In recent times the Methodist Church has shown that strength lies not only in numbers but in the quality of devotion to duty and service. The church's involvement in rural development is a classical example of the Christian concern for the wholeness of the society. Irrigation schemes have been opened in such places as Kinna, Garba Tulla, Dalu and Rapsu. In addition to this, the church operates farmers' training centers at Kaaga and Marimanti, the school for the physically handicapped children at Port Reitz, the deaf school at Kaaga and numerous village polytechnics. The church sponsors over two hundred schools and carries healing and community health ministries at Maua.

If Thomas Wakefield, the pioneer Methodist missionary, returned to Kenya, he would be amazed to find how his call to missionary endeavour has been fulfilled. It is true that there have been many setbacks, misunderstandings and grievous mistakes, but the task of spreading the Good News has largely been accomplished. He would be able to visit

churches which are led by indigenous pastors and evangelists, health care programmes run by local nurses, and above all, the Conference headed by an indigenous Presiding Bishop. He might not experience much change in liturgy and hymnody, he might indeed recognize the Methodist traditional emphases on lay participation, the class system, and quarterly meetings. The meetings, the worship experiences and the administrative styles are, nevertheless, an unmistakable sign that Christianity in Kenya is not only universal but Kenyan in outlook.

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 - (c) General correspondence (1932-1966).
 - (d) Church Union Negotiations correspondence (1955-1966).

6. Archives of the University of Nairobi. Nairobi, Kenya.
7. Interviews. (Those who chose to remain anonymous are omitted from this list)

- Bertha Jones - was an educational missionary in Meru, from 1937 to 1960. She is now retired in England.
- Bertha M'Inoti (Mrs) was wife of Rev. Philip M'Inoti, the first Methodist minister in Meru.
- Elliott Kendall - was the Chairman of Kenya District of the Methodist Church from 1957 to 1967. He is now Director of the Community and Race Relations Unit of the British Council of Churches.
- Ezekiel Rukaaria - was baptized as an adult in 1925. After his elementary education, he became a class teacher at Ukuu in Meru in 1938. He became a supervisor of adult education in 1950.
- Hezekiah M'Mukiri - is a keen member of the Methodist Church in Meru. He became a school teacher in Methodist schools in the 1930's. He now lives in retirement at his farm at Baitigitu.
- Isaac M'Ithiri - was enrolled as a pupil at Kaaga under Worthington in 1923 and was baptized in 1926. He was trained as a carpenter and taught at Kaaga for thirty years.
- Johana M'Mbogori - was accepted into the Methodist ministry in 1954. He was at one time the deputy General Secretary of the National Christian Council of Kenya. He is now the General Secretary of the Kenya Bible Society.
- Jusufu M'Ntimbu - was baptized in 1934 and became a school teacher in 1937. He became an evangelist in 1939 and a Methodist minister in 1958.
- Kornelio M'Mukiira - was received into the Methodist Ministry in 1939. He was a school teacher before entering the ordained ministry. He became the second ordained minister in Meru.

- Lawi Imathiu - is the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church in Kenya. He was received into the Methodist ministry in 1957. His father was the first lay preacher in Meru.
- Michael Gafo - is a Methodist minister from Tana River (Singwaya) District.
- Naaman M'Mwirichia - was educated at the mission school at Kaaga, Meru. He was a school teacher from 1933 to 1954, thereafter becoming a chief.
- Nahashon M'Ibiiri - is an evangelist working with the Methodist Church in Meru.
- Samson M'Mutiga - was among the first boys who joined the mission school at Kaaga, in 1914. He was lucky to come alive from the fiery ordeal of 1914.
- William Kombo - was prominent minister of the Methodist Church in the Coast district. He began his career as a school teacher, and was later accepted into the ordained ministry in 1935.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

A CALENDAR OF IMPORTANT EVENTS IN
HISTORY OF THE METHODIST CHURCH IN KENYA

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>EVENT</u>
1861	Krapf with two Swiss missionaries, as well as Wakefield and Woolner left England for East Africa.
1862	January 7 - The party reached Zanzibar. April 14 - The two Swiss missionaries returned home. July - Krapf & Wakefield chose Ribe as the centre of the Methodist Mission. Sept. 15 - Woolner returned to England.
1863	April 7 - Charles New arrived in Zanzibar.
1864	February - Edmund Butterworth arrived in Mombasa. April 2 - Butterworth died at Ribe.
1865	The first expedition to the Galla land.
1870	First Group of Christians baptized at Ribe.
1871	Charles New's expedition to Mount Kilimanjaro.
1873	Mrs. Rebecca Wakefield died at Ribe.
1875	New's expedition to Chagga country culminating in his death.
1878	Jomvu established.
1880	W. H. During, a West African missionary from Sierra Leone, arrived in East Africa.
1882	Agricultural scheme at Ribe started.
1884	J. Baxter and the Houghtons begin work in East Africa.
1885	Golbanti opened by Wakefield. Steven Kireri died.
1886	Mr. & Mrs. Houghton martyred at Golbanti. T. H. Carthew arrived in East Africa.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>EVENT</u>
1889	Wakefield translated St. John's Gospel into Southern Galla.
1894/95	Famine on the Tana River.
1896	First baptism on the Tana River. Carthew died of blood poisoning, Griffiths settled at Mazeras.
1899	Mrs. Griffiths died. Ormerod died.
1901	East Africa visited by a deputation from England. Dec. 15 - Wakefield died in England.
1902	Consterdine died in East Africa.
1904	R. M. Ormerod translated St. Matthew's gospel into Galla. Thomas Mazera ordained.
1907	Griffiths claimed Embu as a Methodist Mission sphere.
1909	December, Meru District was given to U.M.C.
1910	Griffiths and Bassett visited Meru as trail blazers.
1911	Matthew Shakala died.
1912	R. T. Worthington appointed as a missionary to Meru Mission.
1913	R. T. Worthington and Mimack opened Meru Mission with a station at Kaaga.
1915	Thomas Mazera died.
1917	John Mgomba died.
1924	Representative meeting of the Alliance was held in Nairobi.
1925	The visit of Phelps-Stokes Commission to Kenya.
1928	Opening of the Hospital at Kiegoi by Dr. Brassington.
1929	Together with other Allied Missions, the Methodist Mission declared their attitude towards female circumcision as "uncompromising opposition".

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>EVENT</u>
1929	Beresford Memorial Hospital was opened at Maua, Meru.
1932	Rev. Joseph Jara was ordained.
1933	Girls' boarding school started at Kaaga under sister Lilian Bartholomew & sister Muriel Martin.
1935	Ordination of Rev. Philip M'Inoti.
1943	Christian council of Kenya formed.
1952	Opening of the work in Tharaka (Kamatungu).
1953	New Testament in Kimeru produced (British and Foreign Bible Society).
1955	Inauguration of St. Paul's United Theological College, Limuru.
1956	The Tana River Church, previously of Neukirchen Mission, decided to become Methodist. Its ministers were accepted into the Methodist ministry.
1956	Beginning of the joint Methodist/Presbyterian project at Bahati, Nairobi.
1957	Wesley Church, Mombasa opened.
1960	Lavington Church (Methodists, Presbyterians and Anglicans) was opened.
1961	Kaaga Girls' high school was started.
1962	Secondary School at Ribe was started.
1962	Marimanti and Kaaga Farmers' Training Centres were built. Degree theological courses started at St. Paul's United Theological College, Limuru.
1963	Kenya became independent. Kongowea Church, Mombasa was opened.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>EVENT</u>
1965	School for physically handicapped children opened at Mombasa.
1967	Methodist Church in Kenya became autonomous.

APPENDIX B

METHODIST CHURCH MEMBERSHIP 1933⁺ - 1977

YEAR	MERU	TANA R.	COAST	NAIROBI	TOTALS
1933	103	193	435	-	628
1934	126	193	477	-	796
1935	140	193	441	-	774
1936	162	-	448	-	610
1937	390	-	494	-	884
1938	434	-	528	-	962
1939	440	-	564	-	1004
1940	635	-	680	-	1315
1941	707	-	671	-	1378
1942	719	-	685	-	1404
1943	869	-	747	-	1616
1944	897	-	780	-	1677
1945	954	-	803	-	1757
1946	1186	-	834	-	2020
1947	1222	-	834	-	2056
1948	1005	-	1007	-	2083
1949	1004	-	922	-	1926
1950	956	-	1014	-	1970
1951	1331	-	971	-	2302
1952	1468	-	979	-	2447
1953	1253	-	1069	-	2322
1954	1235	-	1120	-	2355
1955	1525	-	1135	4	2664
1956	1598	2168	1194	-	4960
1957	1718	1911	1226	63	4918
1958	2173	2061	1330	62	5676
1959	3426	2091	1438	87	7042
1960	4527	2243	1116	96	7982

APPENDIX B (contd.)
METHODIST CHURCH MEMBERSHIP 1933 - 1977

YEAR	MERU	TANA R.	COAST	NAIROBI	TOTALS
1961	5994	2343	1654	89	10080
1962	5717	2332	1909	124	10082
1963	5977	2436	2006	167	10586
1964	6953	2378	2483	162	11976
1965	7358	1494	2737	187	11776
1966	8437	1628	2981	247	13293
1967	10510	1507	3132	228	15377
1968	11611	1973	3337	301	17222
1969	12496	2173	3553	365	18587
1970	12769	1331	3368	410	17878
1971	16440	1124	3797	420	21781
1972	13102	991	3951	*	18044*
1973	12588*	1537	4058	353	18536*
1974	8814*	1537	4218	472	15041*
1975	19190	1537	4438	480	25645
1976	19600	1074	4923	478	26075
1977	18077	1650	4769	478	24974*

+ membership figures represent full members and members under discipline.

* incomplete returns

Source: Methodist Church Archives, Nairobi.

APPENDIX C

NUMBERS OF CHURCHES PER DISTRICT

YEAR	MERU	TANA R.	COAST	NAIROBI	TOTALS
1933	18	2	22	-	42
1934	22	2	23	-	47
1935	21	2	27	-	50
1936	26	-	28	-	52
1937	23	-	33	-	56
1938	30	-	22	-	52
1939	31	-	30	-	51
1940	34	-	37	-	61
1941	34	-	33	-	67
1942	36	-	33	-	69
1943	37	-	20	-	66
1944	39	-	28	-	67
1945	38	-	26	-	64
1946	51	-	25	-	76
1947	54	-	25	-	79
1948	66	-	23	-	89
1949	65	-	25	-	90
1950	58	-	23	-	81
1951	70	-	27	-	97
1952	71	-	20	-	91
1953	72	-	31	-	103
1954	69	-	30	-	99
1955	71	-	29	-	100
1956	77	35	30	-	142
1957	78	38	30	2	148
1958	82	43	34	2	161
1959	102	39	37	2	180
1960	133	46	38	4	221

APPENDIX C (contd.)

NUMBER OF CHURCHES PER DISTRICT

YEAR	MERU	TANA R.	COAST	NAIROBI	TOTALS
1961	141	46	41	4	232
1962	136	43	40	2	221
1963	153	46	42	2	243
1964	161	43	43	2	249
1965	176	45	47	2	270
1966	184	43	49	3	279
1967	188	70	61	4	323
1968	210	42	50	2	304
1969	221	42	50	2	315
1970	226	42	48	2	318
1971	236	36	49	*	323
1972	236	37	50	2	323
1973	251	44	48	2	345
1974	125*	44	48	2	219*
1975	257	44	48	3	352
1976	268	42	45	3	358
1977	277	39	46	3	365

* incomplete returns

Source: Methodist Church Archives, Nairobi.

APPENDIX D

INDIGENOUS MINISTRY OF THE METHODIST CHURCH IN
KENYA

NAMES	YEAR OF ENTRY
John Mgomba	1899
Thomas Mazera	1904
W. A. Ambale	1915
Joseph Jara	1930
Edward Gona	1930
Philip M'Inoti	1931
Stefano M'Ndegwa	1932
William Kombo	1933
Thomas Wakefield	1936
Kornelio Mukiira	1939
Ronald Mng'ong'o	1946
Johana Mbogori	1954
Peter Amiraki	1954
Ezra Mungatana	1956
Stephen Buko	1956
Lawi Imathiu	1957
Jusufu M'Ntimbu	1958
Samuel Ngaia	1959
Johnson Komora	1962
Kea Bagaja	1963
Francis Mungania	1964
Ibrahim Lithara	1966
Michael Gafo	1968
Zablon Nthamburi	1969
Wilfred Muthuuri	1970
Jeremiah Mbaya	1971
Nahashon Gitonga	1971

APPENDIX D (contd.)

NAMES	YEAR OF ENTRY
Samuel Kobia	1972
Samuel Mwiti	1972
Wilfred Kaburu	1972
Timothy Kiogora	1973
Misheck Kanake	1974
Jeremiah Muku	1974
John Shabaya	1974
David Taati	1974
Stephen Kanyaru	1975
Daniel M'Mutungi	1975
Stephen Muthuri	1975
Elijah Mwirigi	1975
William Mwabonje	1975
Gerrard Kajogo	1976
Josphat Mwebia	1976
Peter Mukuccia	1976
Elijah Shimbira	1976
John Mungania	1977

APPENDIX E

METHODIST MISSIONARIES
AND THEIR PERIOD OF SERVICE IN KENYA, 1862 - 1960

MISSIONARY	YEAR CAME TO KENYA	YEAR LEFT KENYA		PERIOD SPENT	
		BY DEATH	BY DEPARTURE	YEARS	MONTHS
Thomas Wakefield	1862		1887	27	8
James Woolner	1862		1862		3
Elliker	1862		1862		3
Graf	1862		1862		3
Charles New	1863	1875		12	
E. Butterworth	1865	1865			5
Rebecca Wakefield	1869		1873	4	
William Yates	1869		1871	2	
J. B. Brown	1875		1876	1	
James Seden	1876		1879	3	
J. Randall	1876		1878	2	
R. C. Ramshaw	1877		1883	6	
J. M. Martin	1877	1879		2	
Mrs. Seden	1878		1879	1	
W. H. During	1880		1890	10	
Mrs. During	1880		1890	10	
Mrs. Ramshaw	1881	1883		2	
John Houghton	1884	1886		2	
Annie Houghton	1884	1886		2	
Thomas Carthew	1887	1896		9	
W. G. Howe	1888		1900	12	
W. A. Todd	1890		1891	1	
G. W. Wilson	1891		1894	3	
E. W. Edmunds	1891	1893		2	
R. M. Ormerod	1892	1899		7	
W. E. Riddiough	1895		1895		5

APPENDIX E (contd.)

MISSIONARY	YEAR CAME TO KENYA	YEAR LEFT KENYA		PERIOD SPENT	
		BY DEATH	BY DEPARTURE	YEARS	MONTHS
J. B. Griffiths	1895	1930		35	
James Ellis	1897		1900	3	
Mrs. M. E. Griffiths	1897	1899		2	
Charles Consterdine	1897	1902		5	
Mrs. Ormerod	1897		1899	2	
B. J. Ratcliffe	1899		1905	6	
J. H. Philipson	1899				
J. H. Duerden	1900		?	?	
J. G. English	1904	1906		2	
J. J. Lory	1904		1910	6	
W. Udy Bassett	1907	1918		11	
W. J. Bridgman	1907		1907		6
James Smith	1908				
Frank Mimmack	1911		1919	8	
W. E. Northon	1911	1913		2	
R. T. Worthington	1912		1933	21	
Mrs. Worthington	1914		1933	19	
Mrs. Mimmack	1913		1919	6	
A. J. Hopkins	1918		1950	32	
W. Taylor	1920		1922	2	
I. H. Jennings	1920		1924	4	
A. G. V. Cozens	1924		1936	12	
J. Jackson	1925		1929	4	
H. W. Brassington	1926		1934	8	
H. Clay	1926		1935	9	
W. H. Laughton	1929		1960	31	
Mrs. Laughton	1929		1960	31	
S. C. Chailener	1930		1939	9	

APPENDIX E (contd.)

MISSIONARY	YEAR CAME TO KENYA	YEAR LEFT KENYA		PERIOD SPENT	
		BY DEATH	BY DEPART- TURE	YEARS	MONTHS
J. Burt	1930		1934	4	
M. Martin	1930		1936	6	
L. Bartholomew	1930		1936	6	
C. Tate	1931		1934	3	
N. Brassington	1931		1936	5	
K. Barnes	1932		1936	4	
V. W. Sleath	1933		1939	6	
Dr. Gerrard	1935		1942	7	
Joy Bannister	1935		1955	20	
Frank Ridyard	1936		1939	3	
Joan Barnett	1936		1960	24	
Emmie M. Holding	1936		1957	21	
G. Martlew	1937		1949	12	
Bertha Jones	1937		1960	23	
Grace Ovenden	1940	1955		15	
Fredrick W. Valender	1941		1966	25	
Winifred Poulson	1943		1951	8	
Lucy J. Homes	1945		?	?	
John C. Hattersley	1947		1963	16	
Richard Lindup	1948		1963	15	
Mary Ashworth	1949		1957	8	
Francis Bedford	1949		1961	12	
A. Baslin	1950		1956	6	
Philip Parsons	1953		1968	12	
Mabel Johnson	1953		1955	2	
Nancy Hall	1953		1956	3	
Ida Bennetts	1954		1965	11	
David Livingstone	1954		1966	12	
Edward Roberts	1954		1974	20	

APPENDIX E (contd.)

MISSIONARY	YEAR CAME TO KENYA	YEAR LEFT KENYA		PERIOD SPENT	
		BY DEATH	BY DEPART- TURE	YEARS	MONTHS
Stanley Bethel	1955		1975	20	
Helen Dugdale	1955		1956	1	
Ronald Matters	1955		1968	13	
Harry Mills	1955		1968	13	
Freda Potts	1955		1968	3	
John Ware	1955		1964	9	
Clifford Charlton	1955		1964	8	
Beryl Gardiner	1956		-	-	
Doris Bates	1957		1961	4	
R. Elliott Kendall	1957		1967	10	
Margaret Bethel	1957		1975	18	
Merle Wilde	1957		1969	12	
Ruth Bailey	1957		1977	19	
Ruth Darrington	1958		1968	10	
Frank Hilborne	1958		1963	5	
Herbert R. H. Mann	1958		1969	11	
Bery Cordery	1959		1965	6	
Richard Jones	1959		1963	4	
Brian Morris	1959		1960	1	
Lois Gardiner	1960		1965	5	
Amelia De Vos	1960		1974	14	

APPENDIX F

A LIST OF THE FIRST BAPTISMS IN MERU

<u>NAME</u>	<u>DATE OF BAPTISM</u>	<u>CHRISTIAN NAME</u>
M'Itwoke wa M'Ambutu	August 27, 1916	Paulo
M'Roanda wa M'Ikirima	" " "	Jonah
M'Ringera wa M'Kaithungu	December 10, 1916	Musa
M'Muraga wa M'Rugoji	" " "	Jakubu
M'Inoti wa M'Rugoji	" " "	Filipu
M'Muga wa M'Mbutura	" " "	Isaka
Muriera wa Marungo	" " "	Petero
Njau wa M'Itomi	" " "	Jusufu
Mwathi wa Kagara	" " "	Danieli
Kiruki wa M'Mwiricia	" " "	Johana
Kirai wa Mithiaru	" " "	Samson
M'Rukwaru wa M'Itunga	December 15, 1981	Samueli
M'Kiriinya wa M'rugoji	" " "	Joshua
Nyamu wa M'Mugambi	" " "	Jonathan
M'Mwereria wa M'Ikunyua	April 11, 1920	Andrea
Kauro wa Daudi	" " "	Rebeka
M'Mboroki wa M'Ambutu	" " "	Simeon
M'Mukindia wa M'Itheria	November 7, 1920	Meshak
Kangai wa Musa	" " "	Mary
M'Araci wa Mwambiti	" " "	Julius
M'Njogu wa M'Ibere	February 20, 1921	Charles
Thirindi wa Joshua	" " "	Elizabeth
Ncekei wa Meshak	" " "	Marion
M'Nkoroi wa M'Cabari	" " "	Abraham
Thirindi wa Kirimbi	" " "	Alice
M'Maiga wa M'Ibari	November 6, 1921	Douglas
M'Mbwiria wa Mungania	" " "	Luka
Ntibuka wa M'Rugoji	" " "	Dinah
M'Kiara wa M'Murithi	" " "	Elijah

<u>NAME</u>	<u>DATE OF BAPTISM</u>	<u>CHRISTIAN NAME</u>
M'Mwongo wa M'Rimberia	November 6, 1921	Johana
M'Ruito wa M'Mwari	" " "	Danieli

Source: R. T. Worthington, "A Church Recorder and Register"
(handwritten notes), 21st August, 1916.

APPENDIX G

GENERAL SUPERINTENDENTS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH: 1862-1980

<u>NAME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>TO</u>	<u>YEARS SERVED</u>
T. Wakefield	1862	1887	26
T. Carthew	1888	1896	9
J. B. Griffiths	1897	1928	32
R. T. Worthington	1929	1933	5
A. J. Hopkins (Chairman)	1934	1949	16
A. Bastin (Chairman)	1950	1956	7
R. E. Kendall (Chairman)	1957	1966	10
R. S. Mng'ong'o (President)	1967	1970	4
L. P. Imathiu (Presiding Bishop)	1967	1980	14
J. Mbogori (Presiding Bishop)	1981	----	

APPENDIX H

Oral History Project

Vita:

Full Name:

Birthplace and Date:

Father's Full Name:

Birthplace and Date:

Occupation:

Mother's Full Name:

Birthplace and Date:

Occupation:

Religious Affiliation:

Spouse's Full Name:

Birthplace and Date:

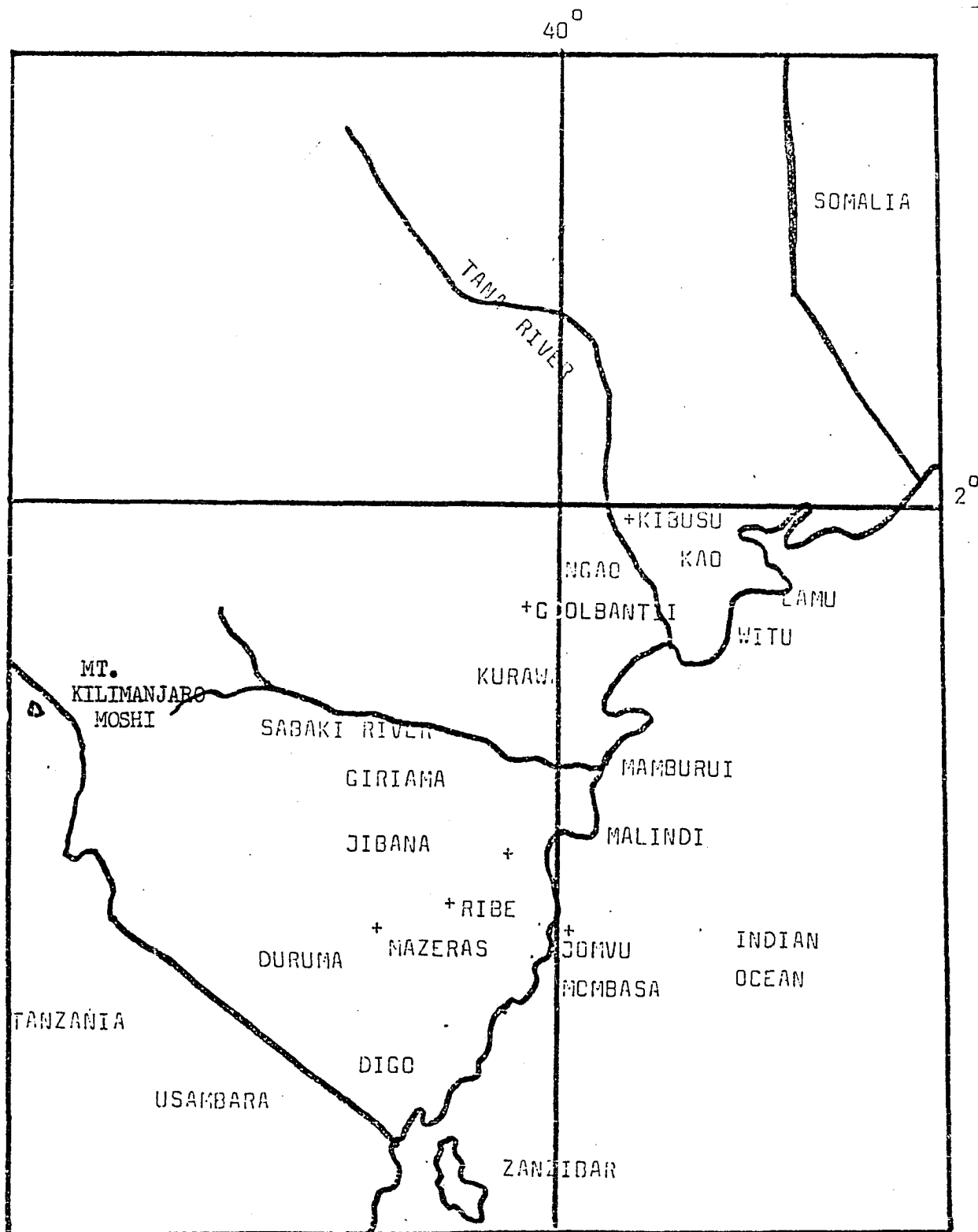
Date of Marriage:

Schools Attended:

Occupation:

Names	Birthplace and Date	Occupation
Education		
Schools attended	Highest grade reached	
Training or apprenticeship	Institution	
Employment	Date of entry	Date of termination
Tribal affiliation	Languages spoken	Mother tongue
Hobbies		
Any special accomplishments		
Church affiliation		
Date baptized	Date confirmed	Denomination
Names of missionaries known	Their approximate age	
Books, articles, periodicals published	Date of publication	
Unpublished materials	Where available	
Notes and journals (including log books)	Where available	
Statistical records	Where available	
Photographs	Where taken	Where available

APPENDIX I
METHODIST MISSION STATIONS ALONG THE COAST BY 1900



+ METHODIST MISSION STATIONS

APPENDIX J

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A MAP OF KENYA SHOWING THE MAIN TRIBES

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